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# Art Treasures Of Belgium

## II SCULPTURE

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# ART TREASURES OF BELGIUM

by

MARGUERITE DEVIGNE

II

SCULPTURE

The sculpture on the cover was part of the decoration of the Halls at Ypres before 1914. It dates from the fourteenth century and is one of the earliest Flemish sculptures in which a robust joie de vivre finds expression.

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# Art Treasures Of Belgium

## II SCULPTURE

### THE AUTHOR

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## INTRODUCTION

The Belgian museums can only give a rough idea of the history of sculpture in the southern Lowlands, including the area around Liege. However, at various times, the workshops of the Meuse area, those of Flanders, Brabant and Tournai were among the most active and most brilliant in Europe. The inability to represent them sufficiently well in national collections is explained by several reasons. One of them is the extreme dispersal of the artists and their works. Moreover, during the Middle Ages and even later, almost up to the seventeenth century, sculpture in what is known as present-day Belgium, was religious, funerary and decorative rather than iconic. As a result it was found in churches, chapels, convents and monasteries, and in public buildings, town halls, and guild halls. It was bountiful; the remains are proof of its quality and interest. A great deal has disappeared. The wars, political and religious unrest of the sixteenth century, the Revolution at the end of the eighteenth century are the main reasons for this. Others, which were accidental, and even changes in taste — perhaps better called fashion — resulted in the loss of many monuments of which rare descriptions can only give an approximate idea.

The Flemish and Walloon artists soon followed the same roads as the monks who left to spread their teachings and the merchants who went out to sell their wares. Since family names did not exist at that time, identification was made difficult, but several figures sometimes stood out as part of the artistic movement of their time. In the twelfth century, the goldsmith Godfried de Claire was a great traveler and he may have been part of the group of Letharingian goldsmiths whom the famous Suger invited to St. Denis to decorate the church of his abbey with precious works. Another famous goldsmith, Nicolas de Verdun, also traveled in Germany and perhaps in northern Italy.



In the thirteenth century, as French art spread to the Lowlands, it attracted many artists to Paris, and in the fourteenth century, many of them settled there and acquired fame and fortune. The sculptor Jean Pépin de Huy, was in the service of Mahaut, Countess of Artois and Burgundy; the work he did for her took place between 1311 and 1329. One of his works, the funerary statue of the son of Mahaut, Robert of Artois, is in the church of St. Denis.

During the second half of the century, Jean of Liège, worked for King Charles V and for people of the Court. He settled in Paris in 1361, perhaps even before then, and he must have been called to England soon after because he erected the tomb in Westminster Abbey that Queen Philippa of Hainaut, wife of King Edward III, had had prepared between 1366-1367. But his activity in France continued; he held first place in the workshop of the Louvre and he is probably the sculptor of the statues of Charles V and Jeanne de Bourbon in the Louvre, which are the principal examples of realistic art of the fourteenth century before Claus Sluter. His contemporary, André Beauneveu, of Valenciennes, sculptor, miniaturist and perhaps architect, had contact with several cities in Brabant and Flanders where his presence is noted, particularly in Courtrai (Kortrijk) where he was called by Count Louis of Male who had a tomb built for himself. But a large part of his career was spent in the service of the Duke of Berry who made him his "master of works of chiseling and painting." Froissart gave him great praise and made reference to the "good works" which he left in France, Hainaut and England. Beauneveu, like Jean of Liège, is said to have done work for this country.

Western art reached a decisive turning point in its evolution. The way for realism was paved all through the 14th Century and it definitely emerged between 1360-1375. The work of Claus Sluter consecrated its advent. Only the later works of this master, the true precursor of the Van Eyck brothers, are known. He probably was born in Haarlem (Holland) and died in Dijon towards the end of 1405 or early 1406. He was inscribed in the Registry of sculptors, architects, and stone cutters, in Brussels, between 1379-1380, and on March 1, 1385, when he was in Dijon. Neither the date of his birth nor the place of his apprenticeship are known. Attempts made in Belgium to find some of the sculptures he did before his departure for Dijon and Chartreuse de Champmol, have been in vain. Neither the statues of the apostles of Our Lady of Hal nor the prophets of the town-hall of Brussels can be attributed to him; they are works of the fifteenth century, dated after his death. Also, Italian influence which was recently believed visible in his training, seems not to have played any part. The only indisputable facts concerning his activity, outside his inscription in the Registry in Brussels, are the archives relating to his works in Champmol.

The workshop in the Chartreuse included many Flemings and Walloons. They were already there when Jean de Marville directed the place. When Sluter followed him, there were more. Many of them remained abroad.

Others stayed in their country, in their own surroundings, executing orders of the Duke of Burgundy on the spot, and when their works were finished, they were shipped to Dijon, as were the retables sculpted by Jacques de Baerze, whose panels were painted by Melchior Broederlam, of Ypres (Dijon Museum).

The fifteenth century was one of the great eras of Flemish sculpture. The industry of wooden retables covered with statues and often adorned with painted panels, became so developed that it constituted a large export trade. These retables are still numerous in Sweden, and especially in Germany. The main workshops were in Brabant, Brussels, Antwerp and Mechlin; they have their respective marks and their own style. There were also some in the cities of Flanders and Wallonia but their production was not as abundant. Jean Borman, of Brussels, was the best known and the best sculptor of retables. His masterpiece, the retable of St. George, dating from 1493, was once in Louvain (at present, in the Royal Museums of Art and History in Brussels); another important work of this master is the retable of the Cathedral of Gusterow (Mecklenburg). Other retables executed in his workshop are in Sweden.

The Nativity, the Life of the Virgin, the Passion of Christ, the story or the legend of the saints, are the subjects treated by the sculptors of retables. The prettiest of the legends is the one told with grace and candid realism by the retable of Hakenover (near Tienen) in which one sees the patience and the piety of three girls, founders of a church, triumph over the malice of the devil. The author of this work is not known—he is one of the best artists of the first quarter or first third of the 15th century—and no other retable is akin to this one.

Inspired by the Mysteries, the Golden Legend or some local legend, the retables had great success with the people. They invaded the churches, carrying the fame of the image-sculptors of the Lowlands very far. They were already known, but they could not have otherwise obtained such unanimous religious and popular favor as was obtained by a familiar, animated and picturesque art but which reached a higher style. Statuary often reached this point, influence of contemporary painting was not foreign to it, and that of Roger van der Weyden is the most recognizable of it.

Despite the political events and religious dissension of the time, the sixteenth century maintained the prestige of the workshops of the Lowlands both by the quality of the artists who went to study, work and sometimes to settle there permanently—they were very numerous in Italy—and by those who, having made the trip to Rome or having stayed in the country, executed outside orders in their workshop and had the works brought in separate pieces to their destination where they were reassembled by choice workers.

Cornelis de Vriendt, called Floris, of Antwerp (1514?-1575) and Jacques Dubroucq of Mons (about 1510?-1584), of whom Jean Belogne (or de Boullongne) was the pupil, represent Belgian sculpture of this era



with the greatest authority. Cornelis Floris, sculptor, architect and creator of a decorative, elegant, rich and varied style which seems to announce the ornamental fantasy of the Frenchman Claude Giliot (1673-1722), left an abundant work which was almost completely preserved. The stone tabernacle of Léau (Zoutleeuw) and the jubé of the Tournai cathedral are the most important works of sculpture in Belgium. The monument to the memory of Christian IV of Denmark in the Slesvig cathedral and the tomb of this king in the Cathedral of Roskilde are his chief works abroad.

Jacques Dubroeuq is the greatest sculptor of his time, in Belgium. His principal work, the jubé of St. Waudru, in Mons, has been taken apart. Bas-reliefs and admirable statues of the Virtues remain in this church. The tomb of Eustache de Croÿ, the bishop of Arras, by the same artist in the cathedral of St-Omer, is also partly destroyed, but the kneeling statue of the prelate still exists, as well as the sarcophagus with his reclining statue.

At that time, foreign sculptors appeared in the Lowlands, found jobs at the court of Marguerite of Austria or with the artists in the service of Charles V, and were called upon to collaborate on some of the most interesting works then being done. Lancelot Blondeel, who drew the plan of the Chimney piece of the Freedom of Bruges and was in charge of its construction, had as his collaborator, Guyot de Beaugrant who was from Lorraine — like Jean Mone, called Jean l'Artiste or Jean de Metz, "master artist" of Charles V, who in 1533 signed the alabaster retablo of the Seven Sacraments, surmounted by a statue of St. Martin, in the church of Our Lady of Hal. Marguerite of Austria called into her service the German, Conrad Meyl, who was to be used for works in the church and the tombs of Brou, where many Flemings worked. Erard de la Marck had Italian sculptors come to Liège.

However, the expanding movement of Belgian sculpture did not decrease and it grew larger in the seventeenth century, to the extent that "all northern Europe, from the coastline of the North Sea to the Baltic, was an artist colony of the Lowlands" (Louis Réau). At the same time, Flemings and Wallons became more and more numerous in Italy and also in France, where they worked in Paris, Versailles, Marly and in almost all the large architectural and decorative enterprises; some, like Gérard van Opstal, were very much appreciated and enjoyed good standing. There were others in Germany, Spain, Portugal and in other countries.

At the beginning of the seventeenth century, Jean de Wespín, called Tabaguet, of Dinant, known in Piedmont by the name of Maestro Giovanni Tabachetti, successfully prolonged the art of the Italian casters of the sixteenth century, like Guido Mazzoni, in the statues he made at the Sacro Monte de Varallo. He was still active when Rubens finished his stay at the court of Mantua.

One of the most glorious eras of Belgian art was about to open, and one of the most brilliant in sculpture, that of Flemish baroque. It owed little to Bernini; the Bernini influence was hardly felt, except in the work of Jean Delcour of Liège (1631-1707) and in some of his pupils or disciples. It was Rubens who gave the art of the Lowlands its accent, color and impulse. He brought the artists a new comprehension of Italian art and put before them the inexhaustible source of wealth of classic art. Sculptors and painters alike submitted to his authority with enthusiasm and borrowed his models, which he sometimes drew for them, repeated the figures of his paintings and were inspired by his compositions. Luc Faydherbe, architect and sculptor, who was his pupil, created works which sometimes seemed to be paintings transposed to sculpture; his great high-reliefs of the cupola of Our Lady of Hanswyck at Mechlin — his masterpieces — are conceived in this "pictorial" style. He, in turn, had pupils who prolonged the survival of this aspect of the baroque until the middle of the eighteenth century.

There were reactions against the exaggerations of this style, exaggerations which were accentuated in the decor of the new or reconstructed churches after the upheavals of the sixteenth century. The reaction of François Duquesnoy was among the most beneficial. In Rome, he opposed the lyricism of Bernini with an art whose depth and sensitivity revealed lengthy study of the classics. His *Sainte-Suzanne* in the church of Notre-Dame de Lorette, was imitated or copied until the end of the eighteenth century. The *Saint-André* of St. Peter was also copied, but the Flamingo owed the greatest part of his fame to his *putti* which started a school. For two centuries, all of western, Italian and French art were inspired by it.

In the Lowlands, Artus Quellinus the Elder, who went to Italy and knew François Duquesnoy, with whom he may have studied in Rome, interpreted the lesson of Rubens with greater moderation than Foydherbe. His great work was the decoration of the old town-hall of Amsterdam with statues and bas-reliefs, at present, the royal palace. He accomplished this work, one of the most perfect in the nordic countries, in his workshop where there were sculptors whose careers were to become important: Louis Willemsens who must have spent some time in England where he was said to have the title of sculptor of King William III, and who did much work on the churches in Antwerp; Gabriel de Grupello (1644-1730) who was, for part of his career, in the service of the Palatine Elector Jean-Guillaume de Neubourg Wittelsbach; and Artus Quellinus the Younger. The Younger, was a cousin of Artus the Elder, and did not perhaps make the trip to Italy, but his art reflects classical influence and even more, that of François Duquesnoy. His chief works are the statue of God the Father, surrounded by cherubs (1682, jubé of St. Salvator, Bruges) and the statue of St. Jacob (1685, master altar of the church of St. Jacob in Antwerp). Artus Quellinus the Elder had had contact with Denmark and had at least had one order; that of a funeral chapel. In turn, Artus the Younger, was called to execute a tomb for the church of the Trinity in



Copenhagen (1687-1680) and his son, Thomas, set up the monument. Thomas Quellinus settled in Denmark, stayed there for a long time (1689-1707), executing more than 25 tombs or funeral chapels, and towards the end of this long period, worked for north Germany, sculpting the great retable of the Marienkirche of Lubeck (1695-1697). His collaborator on this work was Alexander van Papenhoven, another Antwerp man, who returned to Antwerp but who was also busy for some time in Prussia at the chateau of Sans-Souci.

In Copenhagen, Thomas Quellinus was in contact with an Antwerp family, the Van Steenwinkels, who had settled there in 1578 and whose descendants, architects and sculptors, lived there until the eighteenth century. Other artists of the Lowlands were attracted by Denmark. The Walloon, François Dieussart, after a long stay in Italy, spent several years in England in the service of Charles I, then in Holland with commissions from the Stadhouder Frederic-Henri; he was called to Denmark by Christian IV, then by Frederic III, worked in Berlin, returned to the Lowlands and there sculpted the bust of Charles II of Antwerp who was then in exile (the bust is in the Guild of Saint-Sebastian, in Bruges), and he is said to have died in England in 1661.

Sweden also attracted the Flemish, particularly, those from Antwerp. Nicolas Millich did various works there from 1669 until the last years of the seventeenth century. Pierre Verbruggen the Elder (1609-1686) and one of his sons, Henri-François (about 1655-1660? to 1724) each received an order for a funeral monument, one for the cathedral of Upsala and the other for the cathedral of Strängnäs. Henri-François Verbruggen was one of the most original artists of his generation. His art possesses a rare power of expression and excels the sentiments of religious fervor. The confessional figures of the church of Grimbergen and those of the choir of St. Gudule, in Brussels, are the best and most characteristic of his style.

A few traveling artists who lived abroad for a long time or settled there, are still to be mentioned among the most reputed of the seventeenth century. The brother of François Duquesnoy, Jérôme (1602-1654) joined him in Italy, and is supposed to have lived afterward in Spain and Portugal; he spent the last ten years of his life in the service of Archduke Léopold-Guillaume, in Brussels. His chief work is the statue of Bishop Antoine Triest, half-stretched out on his tomb (cathedral St. Bavo, Ghent).

Among the sculptors who never returned to their country was one of the most famous, Jean Varin from the Ardennes (+1672), who was in Paris from 1618 on. Portraitist of the greatest talent, he sculpted the busts of Louis XIII, the young Louis XIV, and of Cardinal Richelieu, and made a statue of Louis XIV, in marble, which represents him in armor and Roman dress, at the beginning of his reign. As an engraver, he attained such perfection that his art was never surpassed. He gave coins and medals to France, whose beauty permits comparison with the august gold; Voltaire praised his work in "The Century of Louis XIV."

The Lowlands did not limit themselves to exporting their artists; they attracted some from the outside, including the Colyns de Nole, one of whom, Robert, became the titled sculptor of Archduke Albert and Isabella. He worked in Antwerp, executed many works with his workshop—tombs, altars, statues, particularly those of Our Lady of Scherpenheuvel (Montaigu), for whose execution he had the collaboration of his nephew, André Colyns de Nole. The latter was very active in Antwerp and Mechlin. Van Dyck was his friend and is said to have done his portrait (Pinacothek, Munich, no. 603; the identification is doubtful) and in any case, he executed that of his wife with their little daughter (same museum, no. 599, sketch at the Pierpont Morgan Library, New York).

In the seventeenth century, the artistic center of the Lowlands was in Antwerp; in the eighteenth, it was in Brussels, at the court of Charles of Lorraine. French influence made itself felt in all the Belgian sculpture of that era. The artists of Antwerp, Brussels, Flanders, Wallonia went in numbers, to finish their training in Paris, where they were inscribed as pupils in the Academy of Painting and Sculpture or were admitted to the workshop of some reputed master. The list of foreigners taking courses at the Academy, published by M. Louis Réau, numbered 43 Belgian sculptors between 1760 and 1815. Several, with a subsidy given them by the Austrian government through Charles of Lorraine, then went on to Rome. They made contact with the classics, made sketches, copies and felt the impact of the works of Bernini and François Duquesnoy. From these various influences was born an art which lacks neither elegance nor spirit, nor even originality. The pretty fountain put up in 1751 on the Place du Sablon, in Brussels, by Jacques Bergé (1693-1756) who had been the pupil of Nicolas Coustou, in Paris, is proof of it. The bust of Maximilian-Emanuel of Bavaria (1693-Museum of Antwerp), by Guillaume Keriex, has both a French and Bernini aspect, while the bust of Jacques François van Caverson (+1713), sculpted for his tomb by Michel van der Voort, calls to mind that of Chancellor d'Aguesseau, by Guillaume Coustou the Elder.

Van der Voort had studied and worked in France, Rome and London where many Belgian sculptors settled or stayed for some time. One of them, Jean-Michel Rysbrack of Antwerp, was to become one of the most appreciated sculptors of England. He is represented at the Royal Museums of Brussels by three excellent works: the bust of Lady *Jemima Dutton* (marble, 1745), the bust of the *Duke of Cumberland* (terra cotta, 1754) and the statue of the English philanthropist, John Howard (marble, 1763). Others also had interesting careers abroad. Pierre-Antoine Verschaffel of Ghent (1710-1793), pupil of Bouchardon in Paris, then went to Rome for some 15 years, executed the bust of Benedict XV—that of Clement XII is attributed to him—and he is also the sculptor of the colossal bronze statue of the Archangel St. Michael, put up on the Castel San' Angelo in 1752. From then on to the end of his life, he was in the service of the Palatine Elector Charles-Théodore, in Mannheim, but remained in contact



with Ghent and executed many works for the cathedral of St. Bavo. His contemporary, Pierre-François Lejeune (1721-1790) of Brussels became in 1753 the first sculptor of Duke Charles-Eugène of Wurtemberg and kept this rank until 1778. He was the first master of the sculptor Henri Dannecker. Joseph Camberlain of Antwerp, a little younger (1756-1821) went in search of success in Russia. At the age of 24, in 1781, he had registered at the Academy of Paris, as a pupil of Mouchy. He was still there in September 1783, and in 1785 he left for St. Petersburg where he settled permanently.

Others returned to the Lowlands. Laurent Delvaux (1696-1778) was the most gifted, the best of those who distinguished themselves. He was in London from 1717 to 1726, working with Pierre Scheemakers of Antwerp, on commemorative monuments and on tombs for Westminster Abbey, while executing other works. In Rome from 1726 to 1732 he copied the classics, works of Bernini and Pietro Tacca, sculpted the busts of Popes Benedict XIII and Clement XII, and executed two statues for the king of Portugal. Upon returning to Brussels in 1733, he was named sculptor of the court, and kept this title until his death. Most of his works are preserved, particularly the pulpits of St. Bavo in Ghent, and St. Gertrude in Nivelles, and the statue of Hercules (marble 1770), placed at the bottom of the staircase of the former palace of Charles of Lorraine in Brussels (at present, Modern Museum).

The artists who went to study in Paris met compatriots who had been settled in France for a long time and whom they sometimes asked for lessons. The Slodtz family of sculptors, of Antwerp, had been there since the middle of the seventeenth century. Its last and most brilliant representative of the eighteenth century, Michel-Ange Slodtz, boarded at the Academy of France in Rome, where he spent 19 years (1728-1747) and sculpted one of his most beautiful works, the statue of St. Bruno refusing the honors of the episcopate (St. Peter's, Rome). He was then Professor at the Academy of Painting and Sculpture, in Paris, where his most illustrious pupil was Jean-Antoine Houdon. He was one of the masters preferred by the sculptors of the Lowlands and Jean-Pierre-Antoine Tassaert of Antwerp (1727-1788) studied under him. His work, a very pretty group, *L'Amitié brûlant les flèches de l'Amour*, was formerly at the Château de Dampierre and is now at the Philadelphia Museum. Tassaert was a graduate member of the Academy (1769), had a workshop at the Louvre and in 1774, became the first sculptor of Frederic II. He finally settled in Berlin in June 1775 where he spent the rest of his life. His contract stipulated that he had to take with him four assistants and a caster. One of these assistants was Gilles-Lambert Godecharle, of Brussels (1750-1835), the best pupils of Laurent Delvaux.

Delvaux, an excellent master, had other pupils who did him honor, Adrien-Joseph Anrion of Nivelles (1730-1773) and Pierre-François le Roy of Namur (1739-1812). Anrion was one of a group of artist-decorators who, between 1763-1779, were busy with the palace which had just been

constructed by Charles of Lorraine, and he is the originator of a group of sea divinities placed in the middle of the shallow pool of the château of Beloeil. P. F. Le Roy had begun to study very young in Paris with Jacques Verberck of Antwerp (1704-1771), a sculptor ordinary of the Buildings of the King, who directed the interior decoration of the buildings at Versailles which were redone under Louis XV. He also had a considerable part in the works of other royal castles. Back in the Lowlands, Le Roy spent two years with Delvaux, then left for Paris and became the collaborator of Charles-Antoine Bridan who sent him to execute works in Metz (the two arms trophies of the Place d'Armes are by Le Roy), in Le Havre (figure of prow of a ship), and at the Cathedral of Charities (marble statue of the Assumption of the Virgin after the model of Bridan, which was placed above the main altar. In 1768, Le Roy accompanied Bridan to Italy and spent four years there. He must have studied at length the art of François Duquesnoy and he is one of his last interpreters. His cupids, his figures of children recall the putti of the Flamingo and when he had to do the statue of St. Catherine for the Governors of the Lowlands, the Archduchess Marie-Christine, he repeated the St. Suzanne of Duquesnoy by giving it the traits of the Archduchess (the statue, which I have identified and which was attributed previously to Canova, is in the chapel of the château of Zidlochovice, near Brno (Brünn), in Moravia).

In spite of the talent of Anrion and Le Roy, they never knew the brilliant success of Godecharle. Besides, he surpasses them by his extraordinary facility and by his qualities as a portraitist which put him in the same place as the most perfect of his era; as the elegant decorator with definite taste, and hard worker enjoying the disconcerting power of assimilation, he is the most prominent figure of Belgian sculpture of the eighteenth century, after his master Delvaux. He spent three years with Delvaux; then, in Paris, he registered at the Academy of Painting and Sculpture as a pupil of Pigalle, but from the beginning he was in contact with Tassaert, whom he followed to Berlin in 1775. In 1778, he was in London and having obtained a subsidy from Charles of Lorraine, he left for Rome. He returned to Brussels in 1779, recalled by the preparatory works for the execution of a monument dedicated to the House of Austria, on which Houdon was supposed to collaborate. The monument was not executed, as Charles of Lorraine and the Empress Marie-Thérèse died in 1780.

The new governors, Marie-Christine and her husband, Albert de Saxe-Teschen, ended the job of the successor to Laurent Delvaux, a sculptor from Marseille called Augustin Ollivier, who made a pretty *Vénus aux Colombes* (1774), and a simple and faithful bust of Comte de Cobenzl (these two works are in the Royal Museums of Fine Arts, Brussels), also another well-executed bust of Charles of Lorraine (cast at the Museums of Brussels; the original belongs to the Duke of Arenberg). As for Godecharle, he remained in favor and the most fruitful period of his activity



was about to begin. His first great work was the façade of the palace which is presently the Belgian Parliament; he made a high-relief, *Justice rewarding Virtue, protecting Weakness and chasing the Vices*. There is nothing in the western European countries during the eighteenth century with as vast a composition which, at the same time, is so orderly and has such sober style. Godecharle was then charged with the exterior and interior decoration of the château which the new Governors were having built at Laeken. At the front, he sculpted *Time Presiding Over the Succession of the Hours*: it is his most elegant and gracious work. Perhaps he made the sphinxes of the perron, or had them made by his workshop. In the interior, in the rotunda, he placed twelve bas-reliefs representing the Months, illustrated by children's games, and for a room in the left wing, he made six bas-reliefs based on mythological subjects (the first and the final sketch of the façade of the Parliament building, 1781, those of the façade of Laeken, 1783, and of the bas-reliefs of the Months, 1784, are in the Royal Museums of Fine Arts, Brussels).

The works at Laeken continued and came to an end when the sculpted decor of the church St. Jacques in Brussels was undertaken. Augustin Ollivier made five bas-reliefs for the porch and the statue of Moses, to which was added that of King David by François-Joseph Janssens. Godecharle was to execute the three bas-reliefs which occupied the back of the apse — *The Nativity*, the *Last Supper*, and the *Deposition* — and the statues of the Church and the Synagogue placed at the entrance to the choir (1786-1787). The sketches of these two statues are at the Town Hall, those of the bas-reliefs of the choir are at the Royal Museums.

Political events caused the suspension of large commissions by the court and clergy, but the activity of Godecharle was not interrupted. He undertook decors for gardens where he mainly used his workshop and where he multiplied the copies of classical sculpture and even contemporary works. He sculpted portraits, allegories and mythological subjects, interpreted with such grace and happiness in the composition which he owes in a large measure to his training, because he belongs almost as much to the French school as to the Flemish school; at the time his Davidian style triumphed, his art was the last survival of the French eighteenth century.

Godecharle was not forgotten under the Empire, but the masters of the moment were Canova and Thorwaldsen. Then, the Dutch Government granted him honors and put him to work, but David and Rude, exiled, had arrived in Brussels in 1815. Rude lived there for 12 years. The bas-reliefs which he made for the Royal Château of Tervuren, destroyed by a fire, could have been cast before falling into dust. The artist had represented the story of Achilles and Atalanta and Meleager. The first of these subjects was still of a classic style; the second was of new inspiration, full of freshness and poetry; in sculpture, it was one of the first and happiest signs of romanticism.

Godecharle, growing old, continued his delightful garden decors and until his last years, kept his exceptional qualities as a portraitist. He sculpted many busts. Some of the most beautiful are those of an unknown lady (terra cotta, 1781), of the wife of the artist (original plaster, about 1807) and of the artist himself (plaster, 1822. Royal Museums, Brussels), that of the Prince de Ligne (marble, about 1784-1785, Château of Beloeil), those of the Rev. Verlat (marble, 1815) and of Miss Catharina Artois (marble, about 1795-1800, Château of Wespelaer) and that of an unknown girl (marble, 1801). The statue of *Music* (marble 1805; Wildenstein collection) is certainly also a portrait, probably that of Mme. Godecharle, studied and begun several years before the bust of plaster; it is one of the most perfect works of Godecharle.

When he died, the artists who first were to represent sculpture after 1830, in independent Belgium, had already made themselves known. Eugène Simonis (1810-1882) and Guillaume Geefs (1805-1883) were the masters of almost all the sculptors of the second half of the nineteenth century. Simonis had been the pupil, in Rome, of Mathieu Kessels, himself a disciple and collaborator of Thorwaldsen; this training made a neo-classic of him, but he could not resist the tendencies of his time: the equestrian statue of Godefrid de Bouillon, which he finished in 1848 (Place Royale, Brussels), is the most important and most romantic of his works. Guillaume Geefs, pupil of the Academy of Antwerp and the School of Fine Arts in Paris, was one of the recognized masters of romanticism and was feted as such, at the same time as the painter Gustave Wappers. As an appointed sculptor of King Leopold I, he made life-like portraits of the King, Queen Louise-Marie and of the little Princess Charlotte. The busts of official personalities which he had to execute were of no interest, it was a job for the workshop; but his talent is fully expressed in intimate portraits, portraits of friends, like that of the engraver E. Schaepkens (Town Hall, Brussels). The statue of Leopold I (Royal Museums, Brussels), that of General Belliard (Rue Royale) and that of Frédéric de Merode, on his tomb (Collegial St. Gudule, Brussels), are his great works; they bear the mark of their time, but they preserve their great qualities.

The later disciples of Canova still imitated him, while young artists, passionate admirers of the Italian masters of the Renaissance, such as Thomas Vinçotte (1850-1925) and Paul De Vigne (1843-1901), went to Florence rather than Rome, soon followed by others in this new trend; one of the most sensitive was Victor Rousseau (1865-1954). The *Société Libre des Beaux-Arts*, founded in 1868, was to give considerable impulse to painting, but it only included one sculptor, Antoine-Félix Bouré (1831-1883), who was especially a sculptor of animals. Among the painters was Constantin Meunier (1831-1905). His art was to materialize slowly; he was more than 50 when he began to set up his work into sculpture. It was a revelation which reached other schools. Meunier reintroduced into art the people whom Hugo van der Goes had already placed in the Portinari triptych of Florence by putting the touching group of shepherds



next to the angels of the Nativity. This time, it was the workers in the factory, the mine, the port and the land, who appeared in the field of art; they were there with their fatigue, simplicity, and dignity. They were highly praised by all the critics starting with Octave Mirbeau.

The revolution accomplished by Meunier had world-wide repercussions. The work of his contemporary, Jef Lambeaux (1852-1908), child of the people, of Antwerp, did not have the same reverberation. Endowed with magnificent vigor and force, it inherited the excessive and colored baroque art of the seventeenth century Flemish. It is not without faults, but these faults are redeemed by a brilliant mastery. The masterpiece of Jef Lambeaux, the *Fountain of Brabo* (1887, Grote Markt, Antwerp) is a queer conglomeration of diverse motifs, including the splendid torsos of naiads, but at the top is the statue of the hero, a new David, conqueror of a giant, who writes triumphantly into space of his victorious feat.

Neither Meunier nor Lambeaux had any followers. The art of the last quarter of the nineteenth century evolved rapidly. Rik Wouters (1882-1916) belonged, as a painter, to fauvism and as a sculptor, he was an impressionist in the style of Rodin although his fundamental originality makes his work into a new creation. Further in appearance from the modern movement of which he is aware, however, George Minne (1866-1941) lived in Laethem-St. Martin, first center of Belgian expressionism and was one of the great figures of art of this country. Uniting the realism and the mysticism of his race in religious subjects — *Passion of Christ*, *Pieta's* — or celebrating the joy of youth and motherhood, sometimes inspired by themes treated in the portals of cathedrals, like the *Resurrection of the Dead*, he too, was alone and those who tried to follow him were able to approach him from a distance only. The painter who was at the head of the expressionist group, Constant Permeke (1886-1952), did not limit himself to large and powerful transcriptions of the North Sea nor to pictures of the simple Flemish peasantry; during the last part of his life, he made simple and noble statues like the classics.

After the French Revolution, Belgian museums began to be formed as small art collections designed for teaching in drawing schools and academies. As soon as the shipment of works of art to Paris was stopped, the local administration, often aided by the artists, took care of what remained in the temporary warehouses formed by the French commissaries. Such objects were found among the assets of the emigrants, churches, business houses, religious and lay brotherhoods, civil buildings, institutions of learning. In 1815, many of these objects were claimed by their owners to whom they were returned. The broken funeral monuments had been deprived of their columns, statues, and pictures of the deceased; there were some which remained in the hands of private people and for a long time after were found in the public market: this was how the Museum of Brussels was able to acquire the bust of Jacques-François van Caveron, taken from its tomb in the old church of the Dominicans. The busts of the

old Governors General of the Lowlands and that of the young king of Spain, Philip V, which belonged to the Guild of St. Luc, in Antwerp, left the warehouses to join the works which were to form the first stock of the museum of this city. Gifts by the Dutch Government, then the Belgian Government, and acquisitions, were added to the works returned by France. The collections grew; it is not possible to follow the development here. They include ancient works and to a large extent, represent the evolution of modern Belgian and foreign art up to the present era.

It is important to observe that a knowledge of ancient Belgian sculpture cannot be based entirely on the collections of the museums although they are important. Particular attention must be given to the collection of models in terra cotta (*bozzetti*) of the Royal Museums in Brussels; it is unique and would enable a reconstitution to a large degree of the history of Belgian sculpture, more precisely of Antwerp and Brussels sculpture of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, if the finished works based on the models were to disappear (many already no longer exist). The Royal Museums of Art and History possess retables and many sculptures in wood. The Fine Arts Museums of Ghent, Liège, Bruges, Antwerp, the archeological and lapidary museums, the diocesan museums, all have ancient works among which many are of great interest (the Archeological Museum (Maison Curlius) of Liège has the celebrated bas-relief known by the name of the *Virgin of Dom Rupert* (end of the twelfth century) and a door tympanum which holds the *Mystery of Apollo* (about 1210-1220); the Lapidary Museum of Ghent has one of the four *Militiamen* of the belfry where they had been placed in 1338.

But many churches are museums by themselves. It is not possible, in a resume, to mention all and to list their artistic wealth. It will perhaps be sufficient to remember that "the masterpiece of western art of the twelfth century, the *Baptismal Font*s executed by Renier de Huy between 1107 and 1118, and which depends as much on the art of the sculptor as on that of the carver, is in the church of St. Barthelmy of Liège; that the admirable St. Catherine, in marble, attributed sometimes to André Beauneveu, is in the church of Our Lady at Courtrai (Kortrijk); that the tombs of Charles the Bold and of Marie de Bourgogne are in Our Lady of Bruges where is also the group in marble of the *Virgin and Child*, sculpted by Michelangelo, and that the most beautiful Virgin *Sedes Sapientiae*, thirteenth century, is in the church St. Jean of Liège.

Belgian sculpture includes many masters, but it has remained in the shadow of Flemish painting whose fame is universal and whose influence stretched far and long. It was not well known abroad where its artists were active, however, and where their works are still proof of their gifts and knowledge.

About the illustrations and their captions:

M. D.

The Belgian Government Information Center is responsible for the choice of illustrations and the captions beneath them.



## *Illustrations*

### I. FOREIGN SCHOOLS OF SCULPTURE

ITALY, FRANCE,  
GERMANY, HOLLAND,  
YUGOSAVIA, RUSSIA





GUIDO MAZZONI (Paganino) (1450-1518), Italian: *Portrait of a Man*. Museum of Fine Arts, Ghent. Born in Modena, Mazzoni followed Charles VIII to France where he worked at Amboise and Gaillon. The above head, in terra cotta, resembles similar figures in works of Mazzoni kept in the Church of San Giovanni Decolatto in Modena.

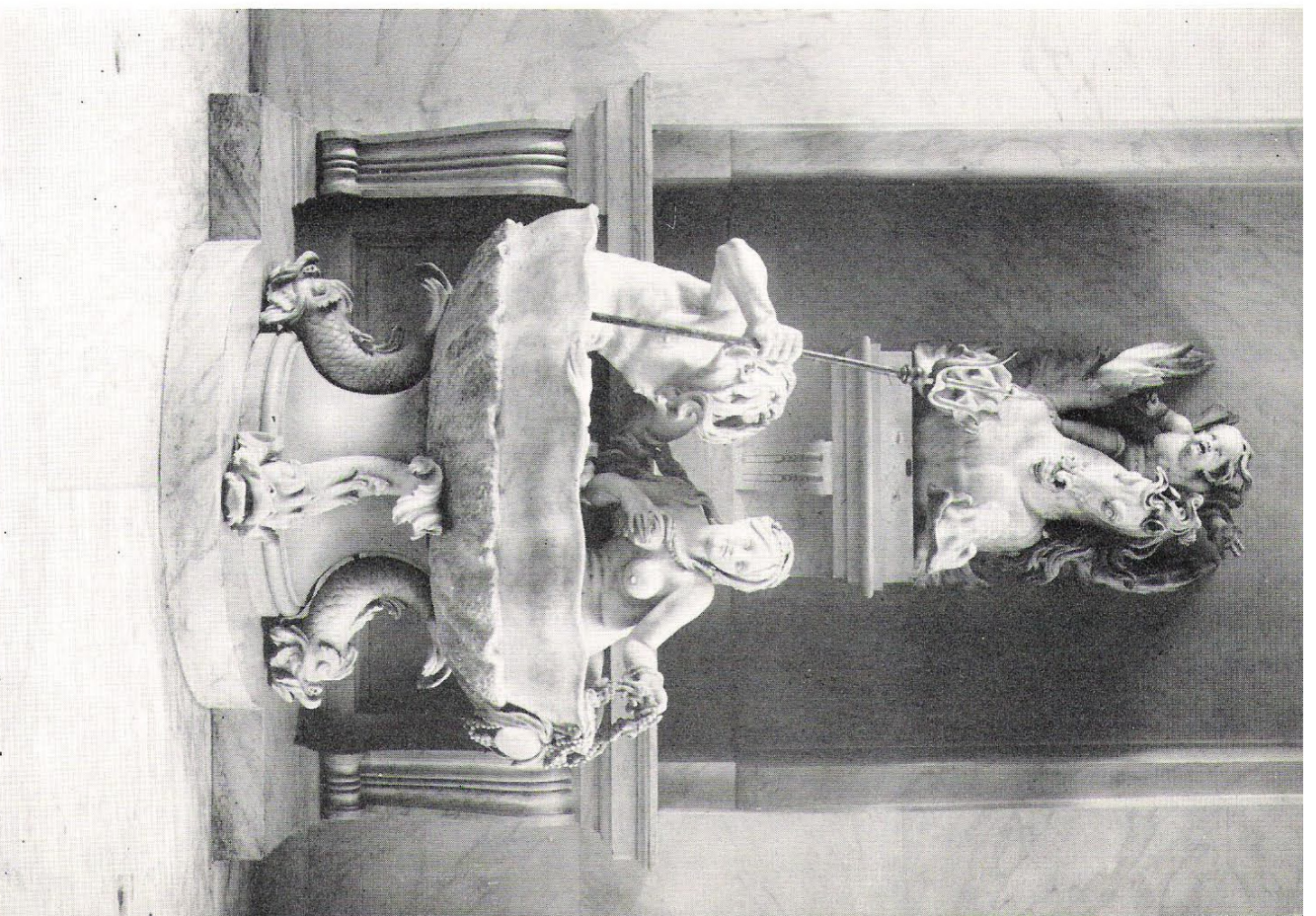


MICHELANGELO BUONARROTI (1475-1564), Italian: *Madonna and Child*. Church of Our Lady, Brugge (Bruges). One of the few sculptures of Michelangelo outside of Italy. It is a work of his first period. It was stolen by the Germans in 1944 and recovered in 1945.





GABRIEL DE GRUPELLO (1644-1730): *Portrait of Johan-Wilhelm van Neuburg Wittelsboel, Count Palatine*. Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Brussels. Of Italian origin, Gruppello studied under Artus Quellinus, Sr., and worked in Germany and in Belgium. Most of his works can be seen in Germany. The model, related to the Spanish royal family, is wearing the Order of the Golden Fleece.



GABRIEL DE GRUPELLO (1644-1730): *Neptune and Thetis*. Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Brussels. This elegant fountain representing the god of the Deep and his wife, stands in front of a waterhorse with a Cupid astride on its back. The work was commissioned by the fish-mongers guild of Brussels in 1675.



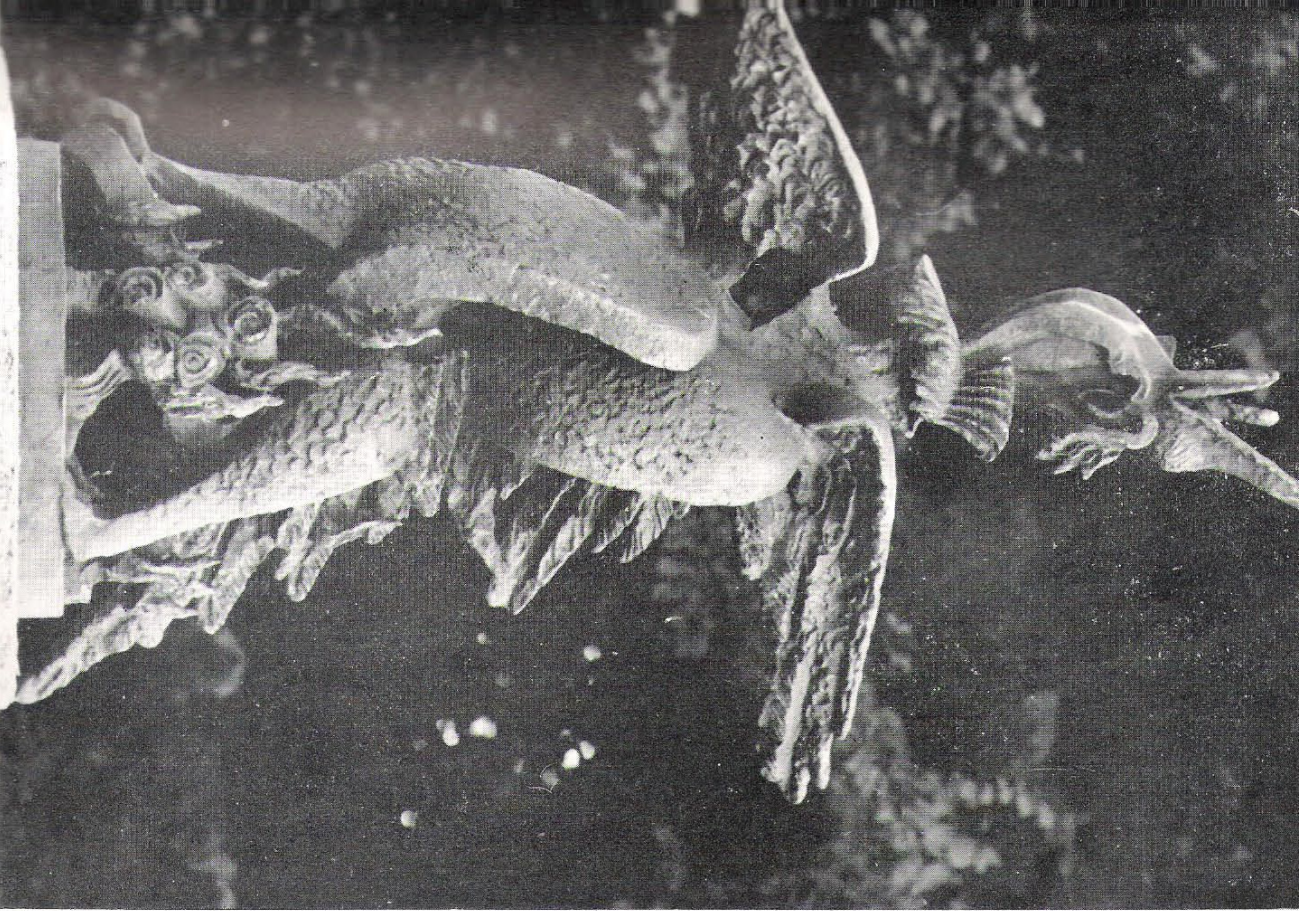


GEORGE PETEL (1590-1634): Bust of P. P. Rubens. Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Antwerp. This German sculptor visited the Low Countries twice, before 1625 and between 1630-31. He portrayed Rubens shortly after his marriage to Hélène Fourment. Although rather heavy as to its style, this portrait has all the earmarks of life and sincerity. Petel was profoundly influenced by the Master's art.



LOUIS-CLAUDE VASSÉ (1716-1772), French: Portrait of the French Economist, François Quesnay. Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Brussels. Vassé was court sculptor at Versailles. His most important work is the mausoleum of King Stanislas at Nancy. Quesnay became the father of the Physiocrats and deeply influenced economic thought of his period.





OSSIP ZADKINE (1890), Russian: *Phoenix*. Middelheim Open Air Museum of Sculpture, Antwerp. Middelheim Park in Antwerp has become in recent years the first open air museum of sculpture in Europe. The lovely surroundings and the natural light bring out the qualities of great sculpture.



IVAN MESTROVIC (1883), Yugoslav: *Salomé*. Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Brussels. This powerful bas-relief, representing Salomé dancing with her gory trophy, is one of the best known and most original creations of the master. After his studies in Vienna, Mestrovic became Rodin's friend and underwent the influence of Bourdelle.



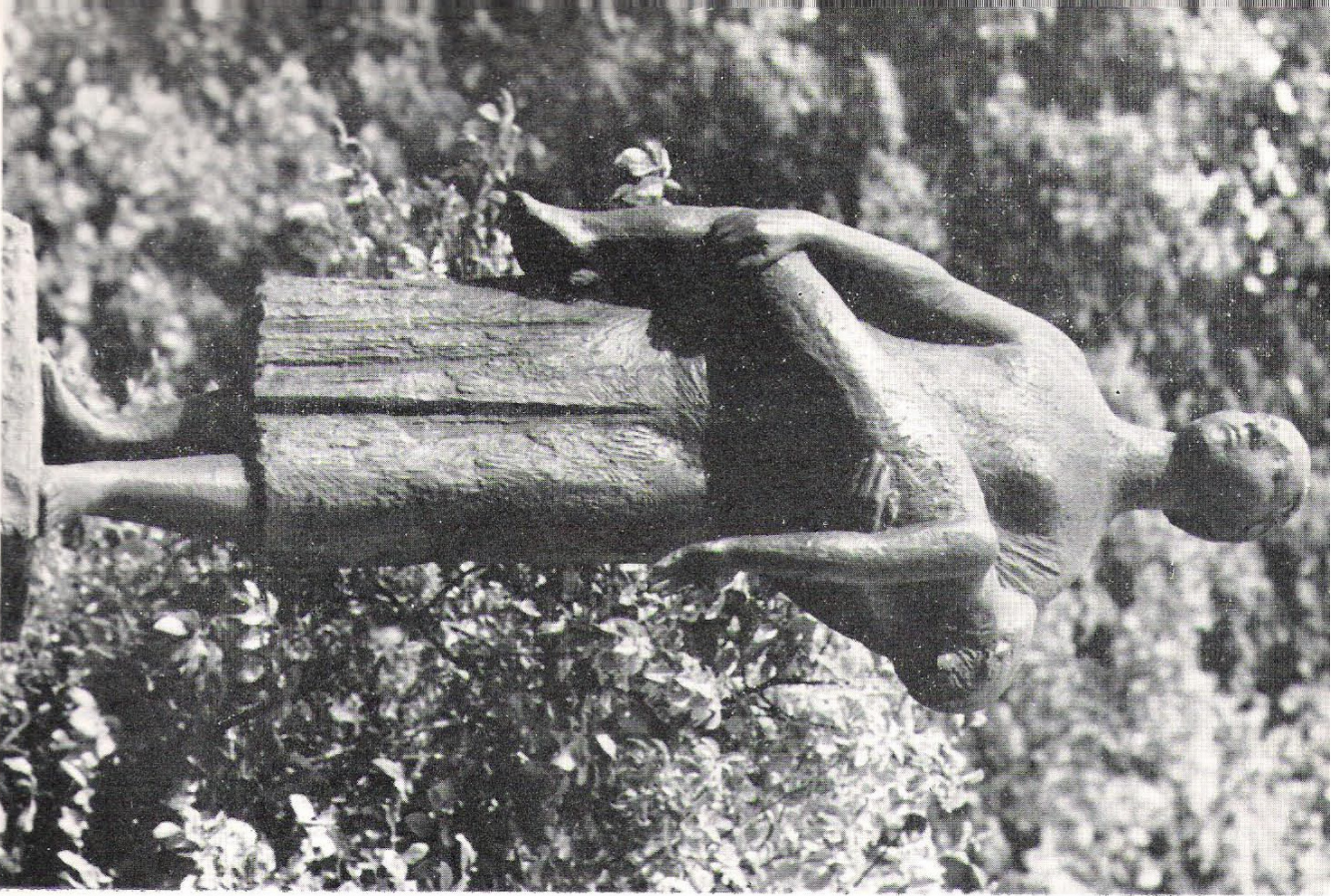


GEORG KOLBE (1877-1947), German: *Sitting Nude*. Middelheim Open Air Museum of Sculpture, Antwerp. One of the most interesting works of the German master.



GEORG KOLBE (1877-1947), Germany: *Portrait of Henry van de Velde*, Museum of Fine Arts, Antwerp. One of the most outstanding sculptors of modern times, Kolbe underwent the influence of Rodin. His model, architect H. van de Velde, is one of the renovators of modern decorative art and architecture. Among his works the best known is perhaps the "Kröller-Müller" (Van Gogh) Museum in Holland.





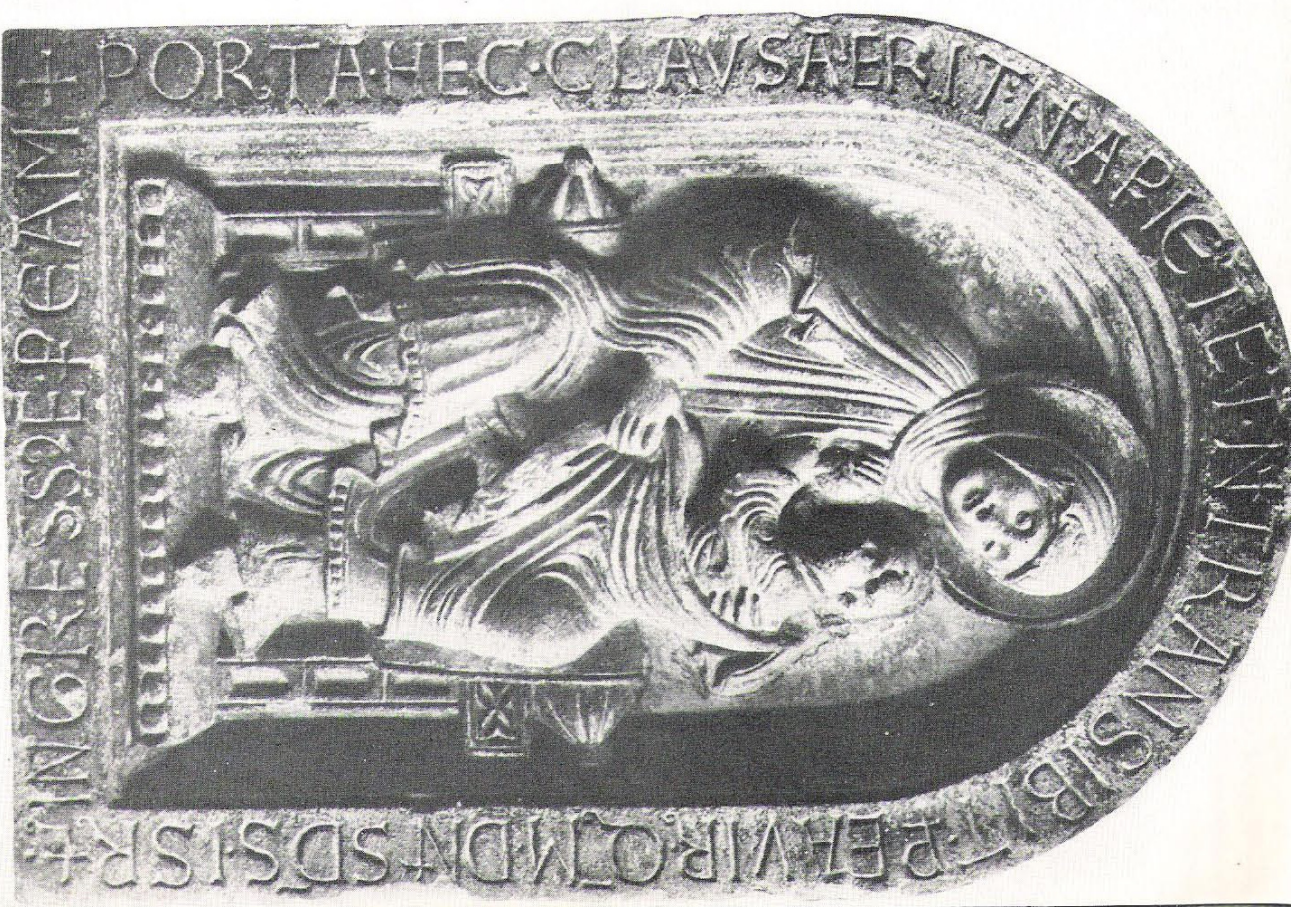
MARI S. ANDRIESSEN (1897), Dutch: *The Victim of the Air-Raid*. Middelheim Open Air Museum of Sculpture, Antwerp. The Middelheim Museum shows this impressive work of the artist to its best advantage.



GIACOMO MANZÙ (1908), Italian: *The Dance*. Middelheim Open Air Museum of Sculpture, Antwerp. It has long been an axiom among sculptors that any sculpture that cannot stand the test of a display in the open is not worth looking at. The works displayed at the Middelheim Museum successfully survive this ordeal.

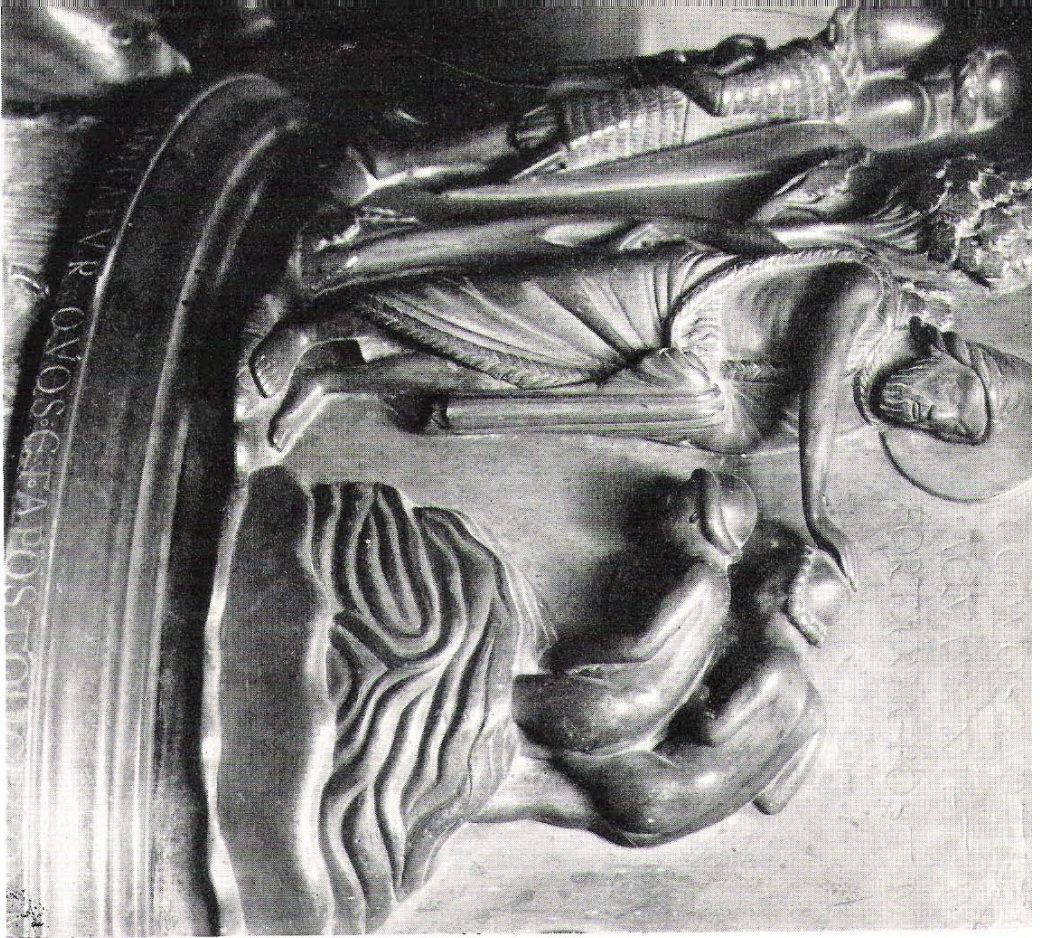


## II. BELGIAN SCHOOL

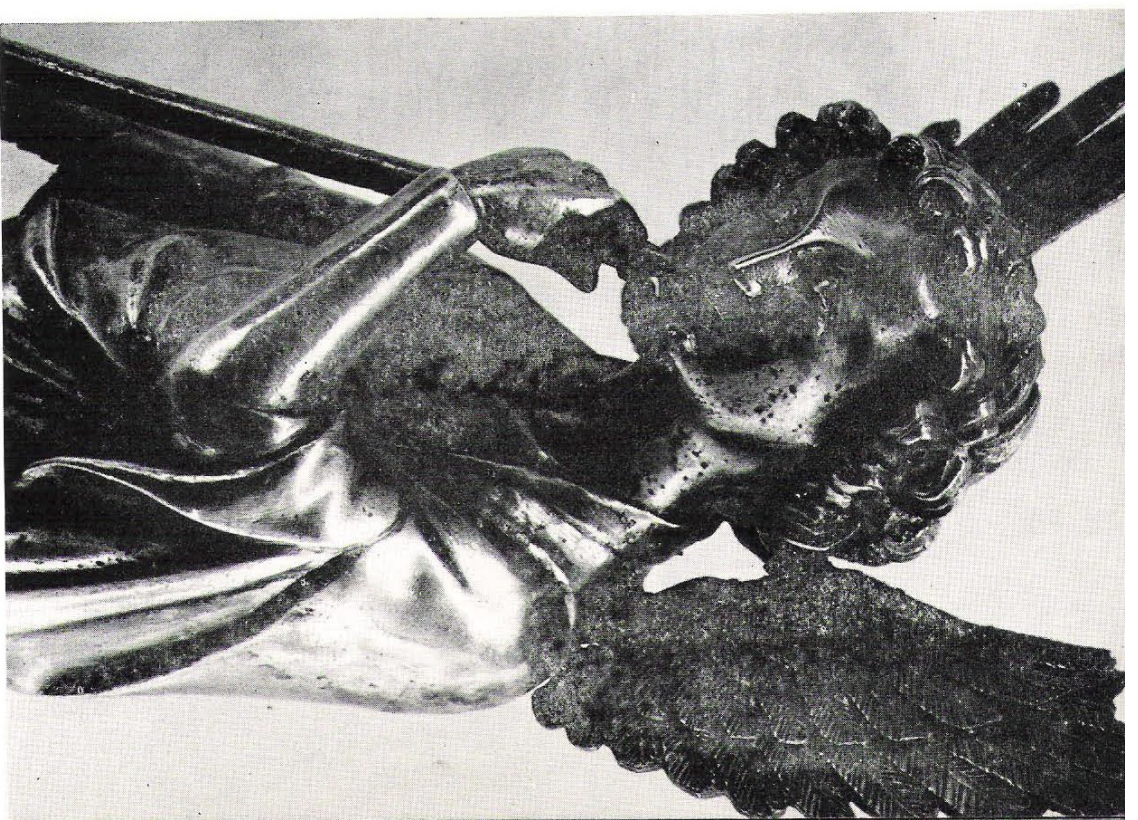


THE MADONNA OF DOM RUPERT: Curtius Museum, Liège. One of the most venerable sculptures of medieval art, this Madonna probably dates back to 1150.





RENIER DE HUY (twelfth century): *The Baptism of the Jews in the Jordan River*. St. Bartholomew Church, Liège.



JACQUEMON DE NIVELLES (1298): *Angel with Musical Instrument*. Shrine of St. Gertrude, Nivelles. The sculptor has achieved harmony and serenity in the expression of this angel. Her delicately chiseled features are almost symmetrical.



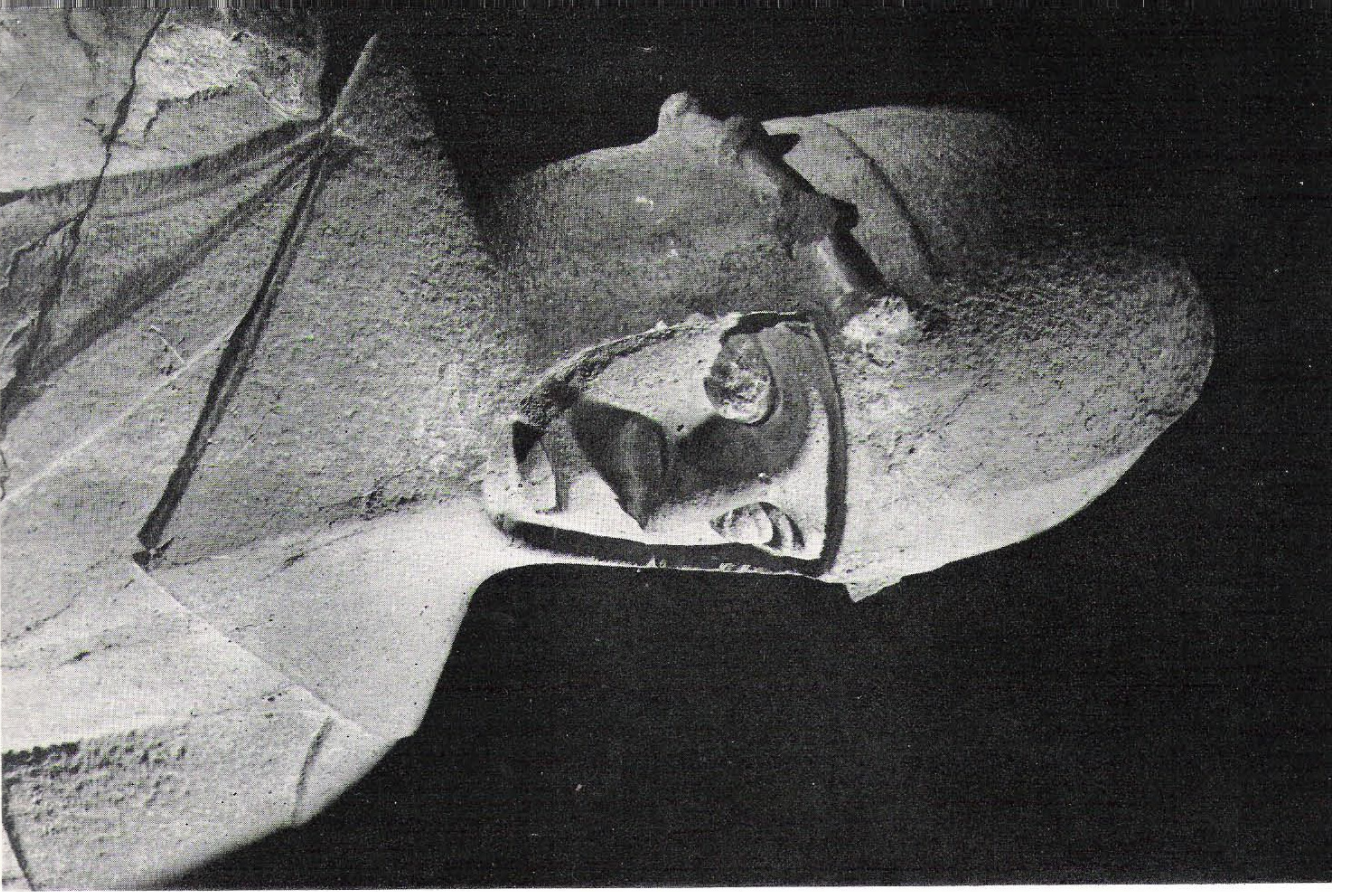


RELIQUARY OF SAINT ELEUTHERE (thirteenth century): Cathedral of Tournai. The saint holds a miniature of the Tournai Cathedral in his left hand. The reliquary is one of the most elaborate and significant works of art of that early period.



HEAD OF THE VIRGIN: Notre Dame de Saint Servais, Liège. This impressive statue dates from between 1330 and 1340.





**MILITIAMAN OF GHENT** (fourteenth century). Belfry of Ghent. This impressive Gothic sculpture represents a member of the local militia which played such an important role in the city's struggle for autonomy.



**JAN BORMAN** (fifteenth century): *The Retable of St. George*. Museum of the Porte de Hal, Brussels. Among the many known and anonymous Flemish sculptors of the fifteenth century, Borman was undoubtedly one of the greatest. He allied a Flemish sense of realism with a gracefulness that recalls the Florentine school.





**MARIA MAGDALENE:** End of the fifteenth century. Detail of the Passion. Altar in St. Dimpna Church, Geel. Sculptured retables were produced and exported by the hundreds in medieval Flanders. The Passion of Geel is a striking example of the craftsmanship and profound religious inspiration of the Flemish artists. (J. van Herck: *Het Passie-reliëf van Geel*, Antwerp, 1951.)



**PIETER DE BACKERE** (fifteenth century): Tomb of Mary of Burgundy. Our Lady's Church, Bruges. At the age of 19, Mary of Burgundy fell heir to the Netherlands after the death of her father, Charles the Bold. She married the Emperor Maximilian and thus brought an enormous accession of territory to the Hapsburg house. Mary died when her horse threw her during a hunting party. Her youth, her beauty and her melancholy fate inspired the poets of her time.



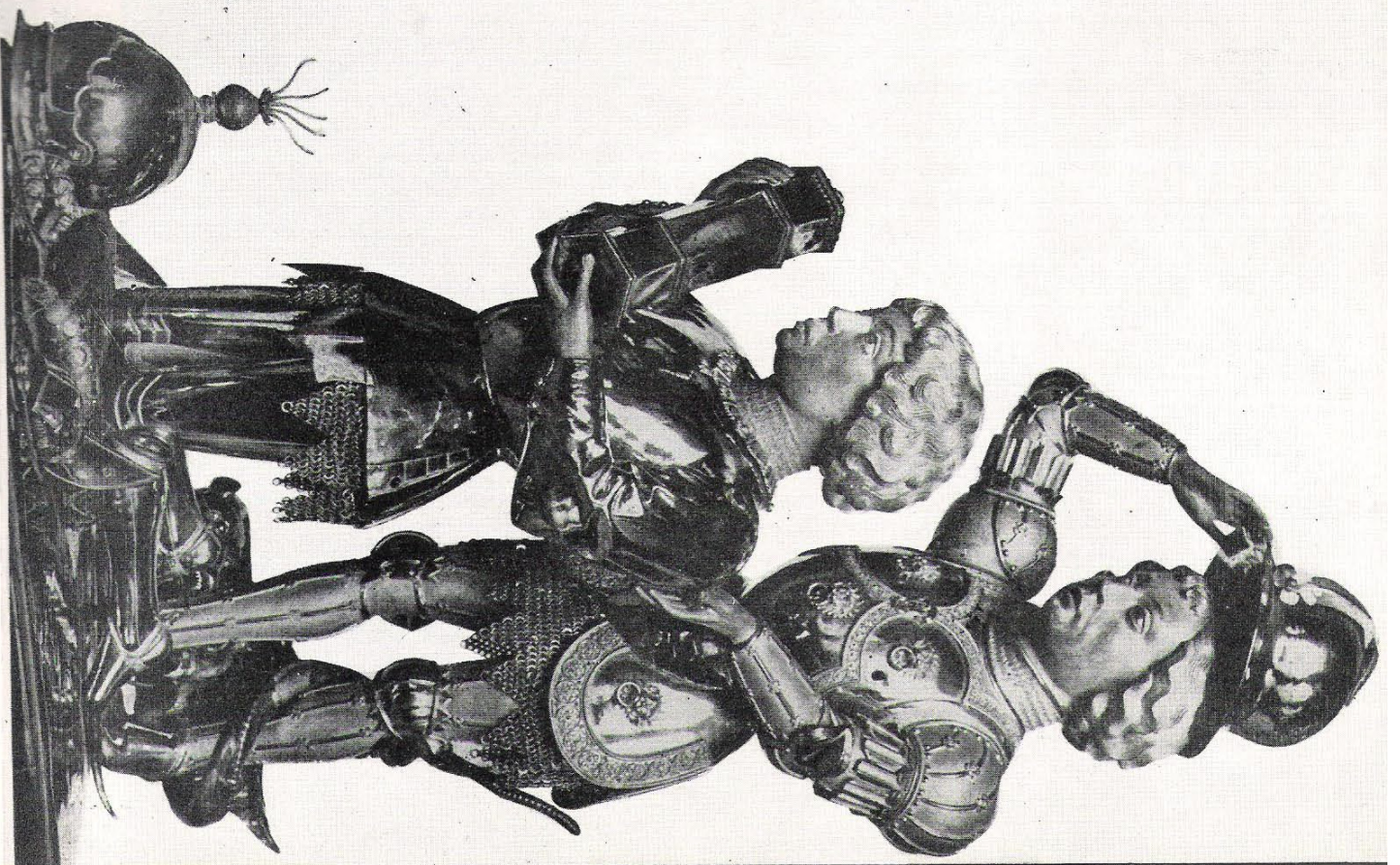


HEAD OF SAINT JOHN (fifteenth century): Collegial Church of St. Gertrude, Nivelles. This stone sculpture shows some of the characteristics of the Brabant style of the sixteenth century.

CHARLES LAYET (fifteenth century): Charles the Bold, Cathedral of Liège.

One of the finest goldsmiths of his time, Layet gives evidence of the quality of his work in the expression of repentance on the face of the kneeling Charles, Duke of Burgundy. The Duke had treated his people harshly during an uprising and years afterward, tried to expiate his sins by offering reliquaries to the church, one of which is shown in his hands. His patron saint stands behind.

→







HEAD OF CHRIST: Wood (sixteenth century). Boussu-lez-Mons. About 1500 the sculptors of Hainaut began to stress the physical suffering endured by Our Savior. This figure, preserved in a small village church, is particularly dramatic.

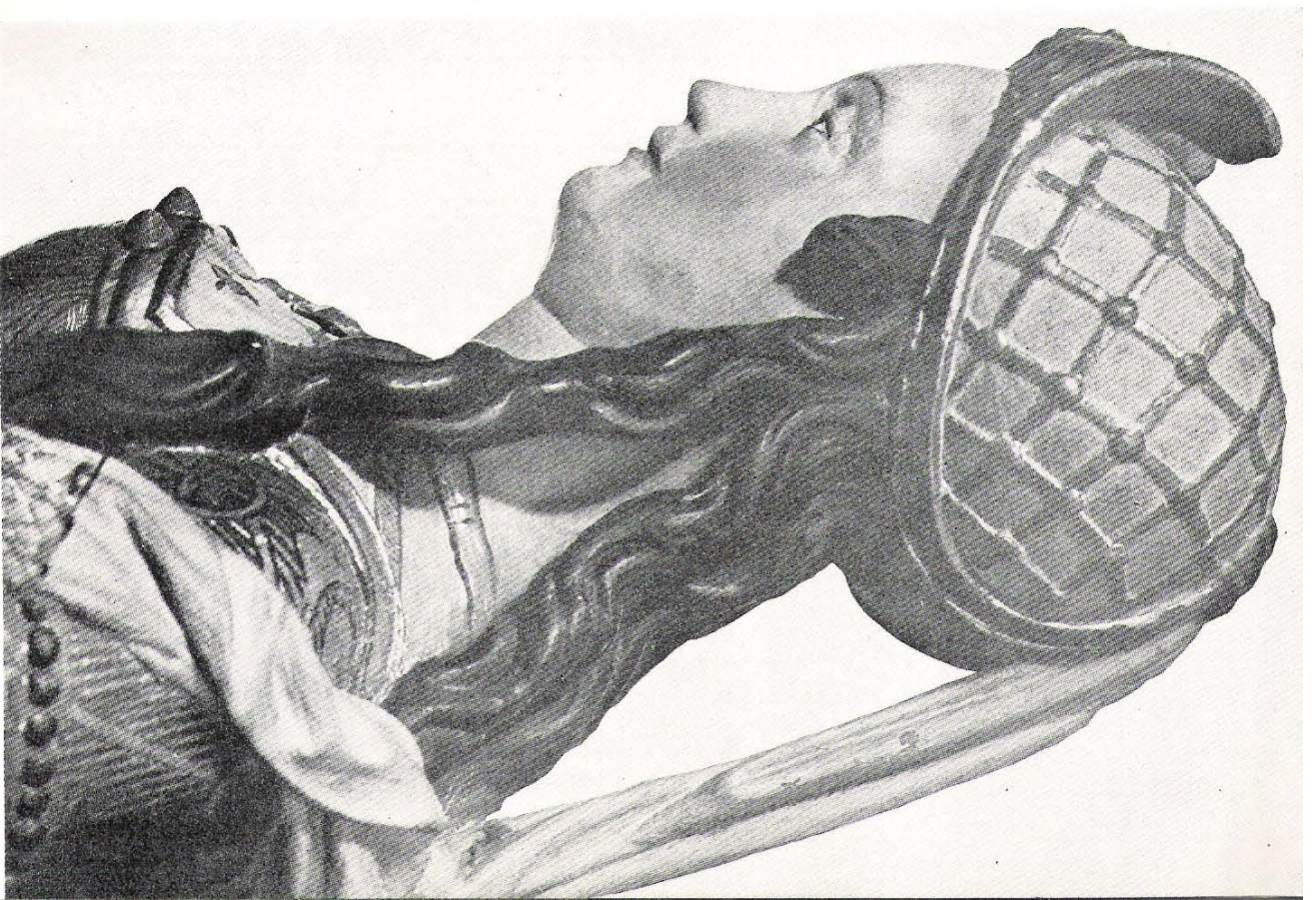


CONRAD MEY (about 1520): Bust of Charles V. Gruuthuuse Museum, Bruges. Polychrome wood.





SAINTE ALENE (sixteenth century): St. Ambrose Church, Dilbeek. Polychrome wood.

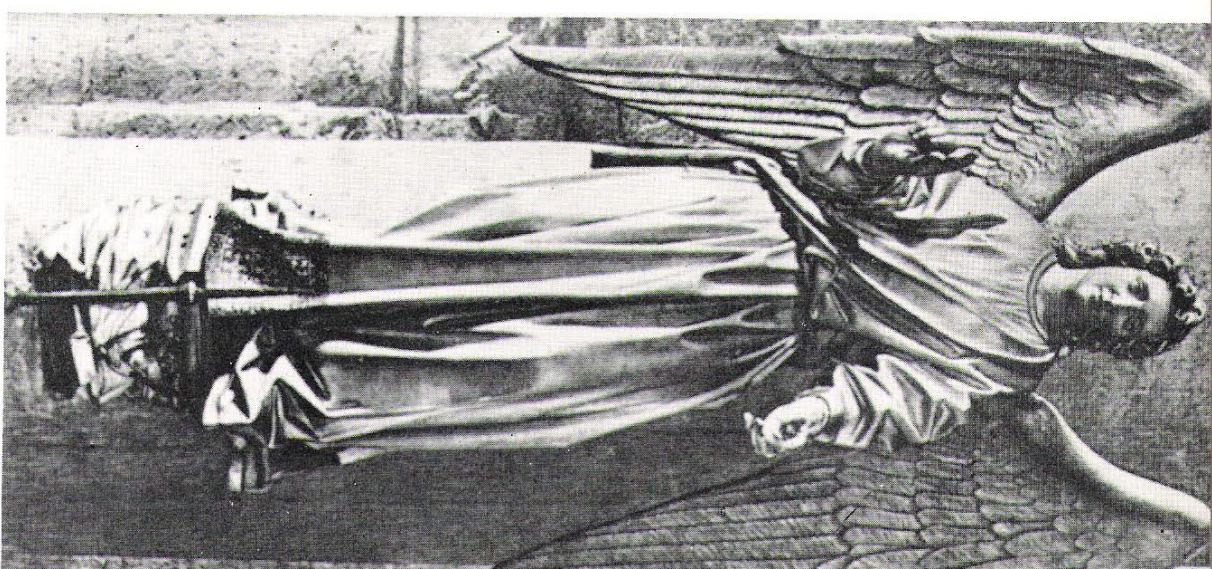


Profile of SAINTE ALENE, preceding photograph.





WEeping WOMEN AT CHRIST'S ENTOMBMENT (fifteenth century): Church of St. Vincent, Soignies. Many of the sculptures of the fifteenth century are closely related to the paintings of the Flemish Primitives as is apparent in the above work.

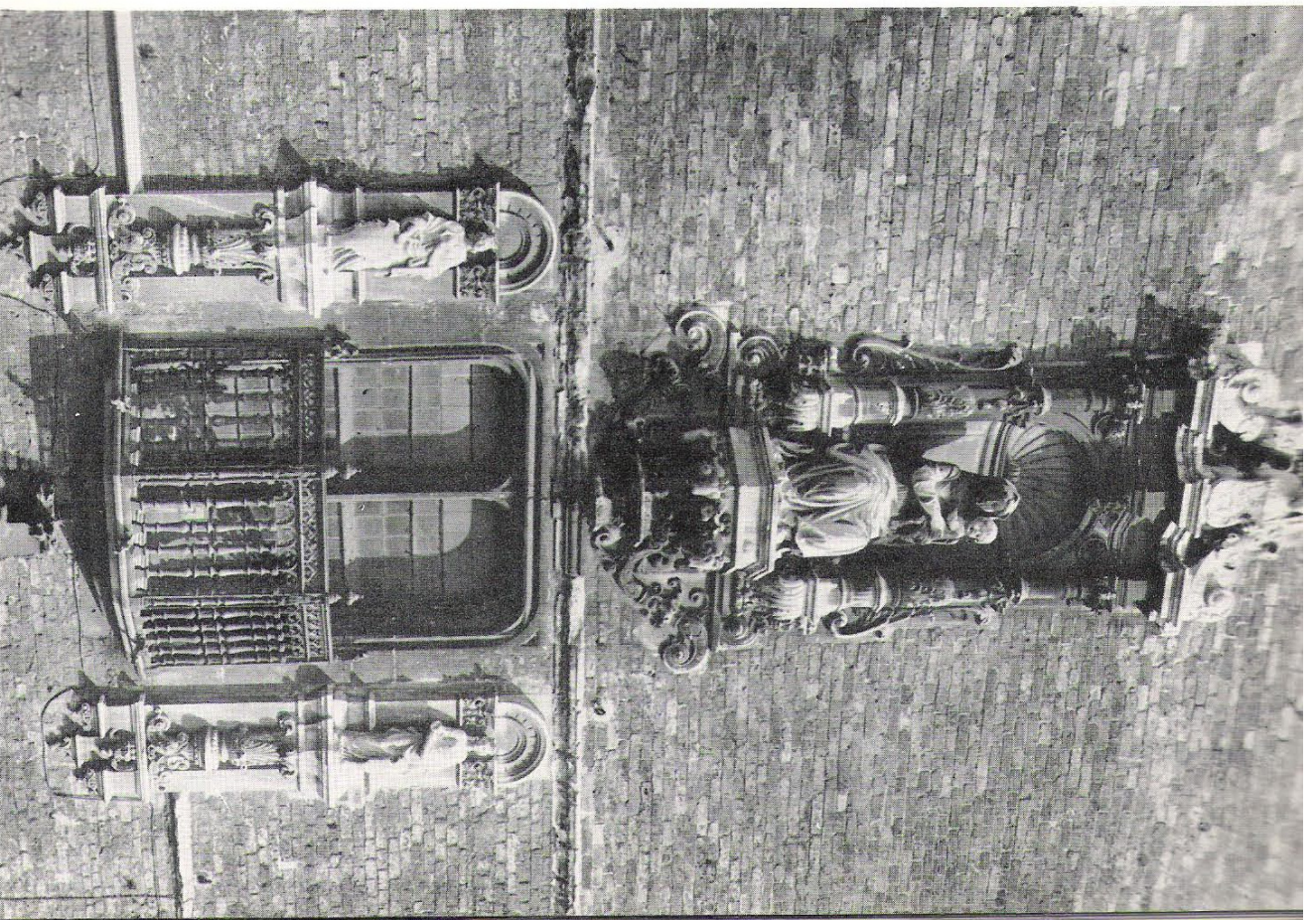


THE ANGEL OF THE ANNUNCIATION (sixteenth century): Church of St. Marie Madeleine, Tournai.



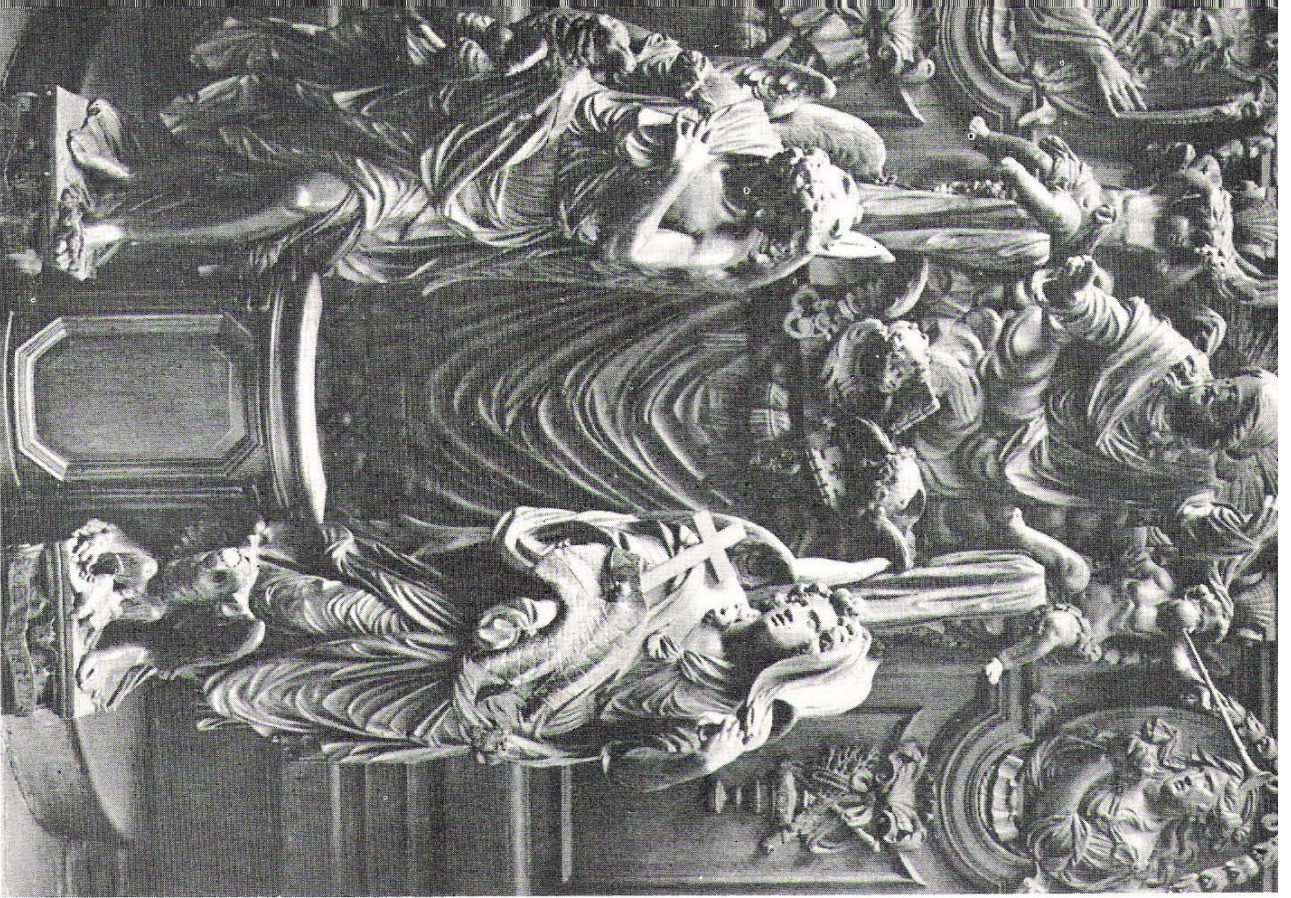


**TWO APOSTLES:** Church of Our Lady of Hal. Although the sixteenth century artist who created this impressive series of religious sculptures has not been identified with certainty, it is quite evident that he belonged to a great and admirable tradition.

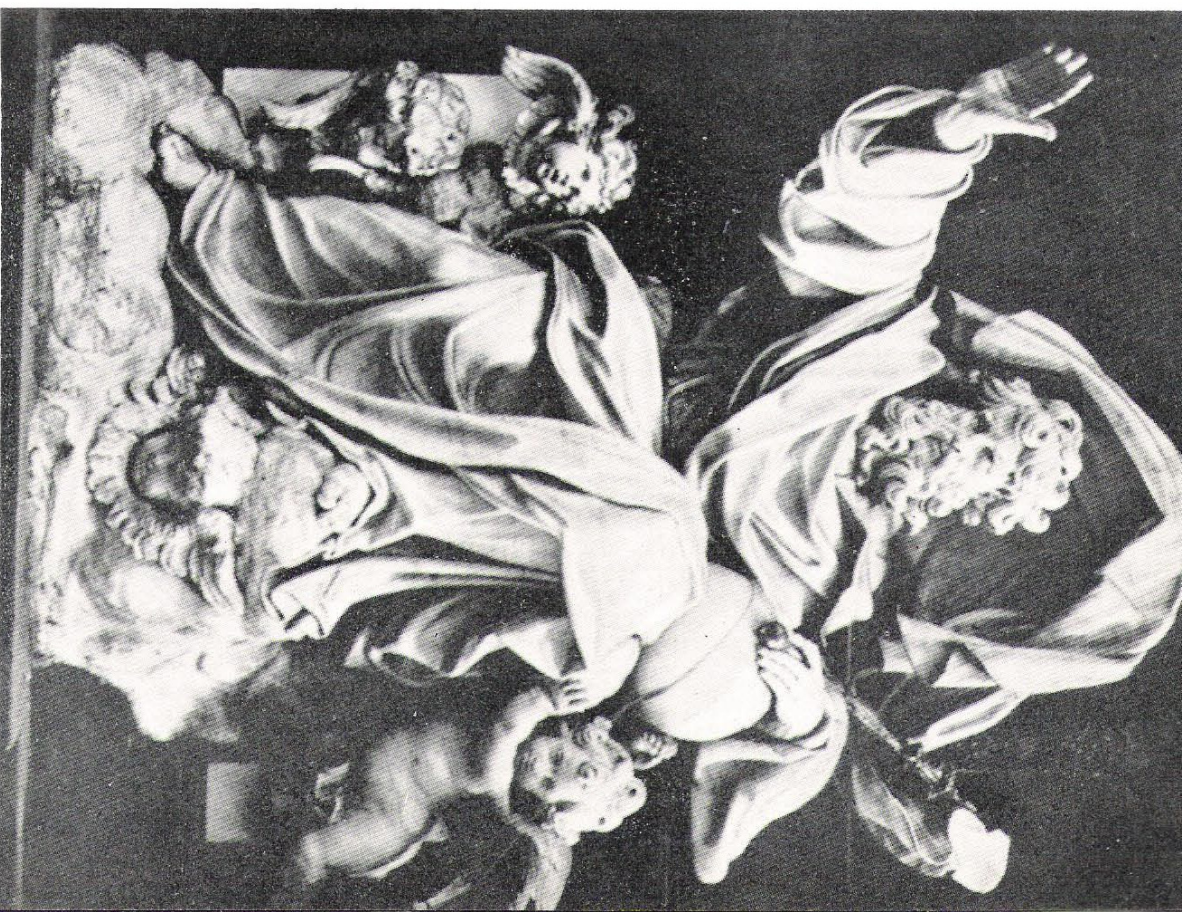


**VIRGIN AND CHILD:** Belfry of Bruges. Many of the old buildings of Belgium are heavily ornamented with remarkable sculpture. It enlivens the austere architecture of the medieval structures.



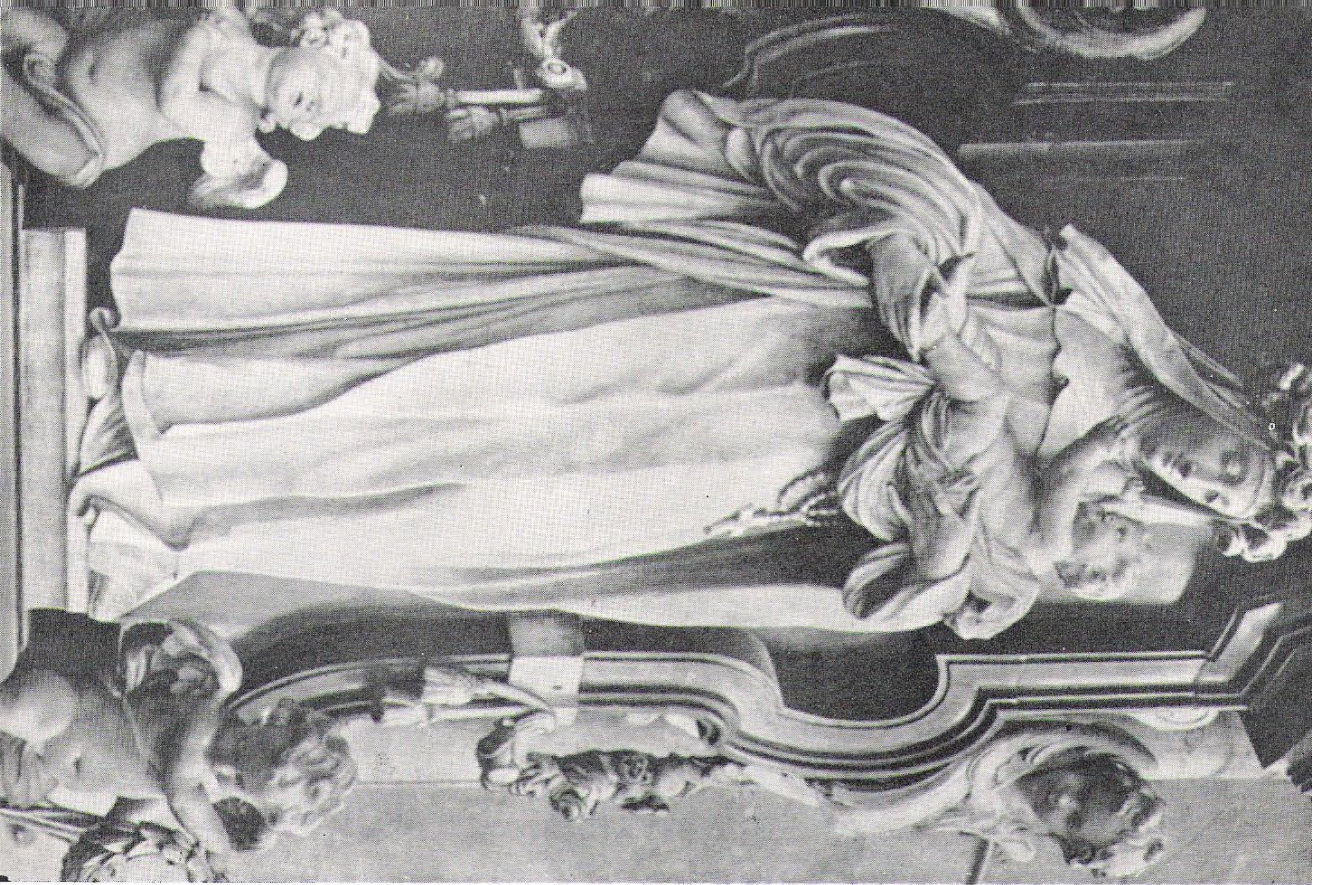


**CONFESSIONAL:** Seventeenth century. St. Paul's Church, Antwerp. Baroque art. The churches of Belgium offer a fantastic concentration of art work, especially sculpture. During the 17th century the severity of the Gothic architecture was softened by an abundance of baroque ornamentation.



**ARTUS QUELLINUS** (1609-1668): *Our Lord*. St. Salvator Church, Brugge (Bruges). At the height of the baroque period, Quellinus created a number of impassioned works in which the dramatic movement does not destroy the monumental character.





ARTUS QUELLINUS, JR. (1625-1700): *Statue of Saint Rosa of Lima*. St. Paul's Church, Antwerp. Quellinus studied and worked in Italy, England and in his home country. He exerted wide influence and had a great number of pupils.



MICHEL VAN DER VOORT, SR. (1667-1737): Details of the High Altar of St. Sulpitius Church in Diest. Top: Left — Head of a seraph; Right — Same; Bottom: Left — St. Sulpitius; Right — Same. Van der Voort was one of the outstanding baroque sculptors of Antwerp.





LAURENT DELVAUX (1696-1778): *The Theological Virtues*. Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Brussels. After extensive travel and studies in France, Italy and England, Delvaux became sculptor of the court in Brussels. He was influenced by F. Duquesnoy. The three figures represent Faith, Hope and Charity.



PIERRE-ANTOINE VERSCHAFFELT (1710-1793): *Portrait of Pope Clement XII*. Museum of Fine Arts, Ghent. Trained in France and in Rome, Verschaffelt ended his career in Germany. In Rome, he cast the colossal statue of St. George which stands on top of the Castello San Angelo. This realistic portrait of Pope Clement XII (1652-1741) shows the qualities of Verschaffelt's strong individual talent.





PIERRE-FRANÇOIS LE ROY (1739-1812): *Portrait of Henri van der Noot*. City Museum, Brussels. One of the lesser known sculptors of the 18th century, Le Roy had an excellent knowledge of his craft. He made a striking and vivid portrait of Belgium's revolutionary leader, the lawyer, van der Noot, whose attack on the Austrian domination of



GILLES-LAMBERT GODECHARLE (1750-1835): *Portrait of the Artist's Wife*. Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Brussels. Godecharle represented his wife at the age of 31; she was 25 years his junior. The bust is a good example of the style at the turn of the 18th century when classical influences were strong.



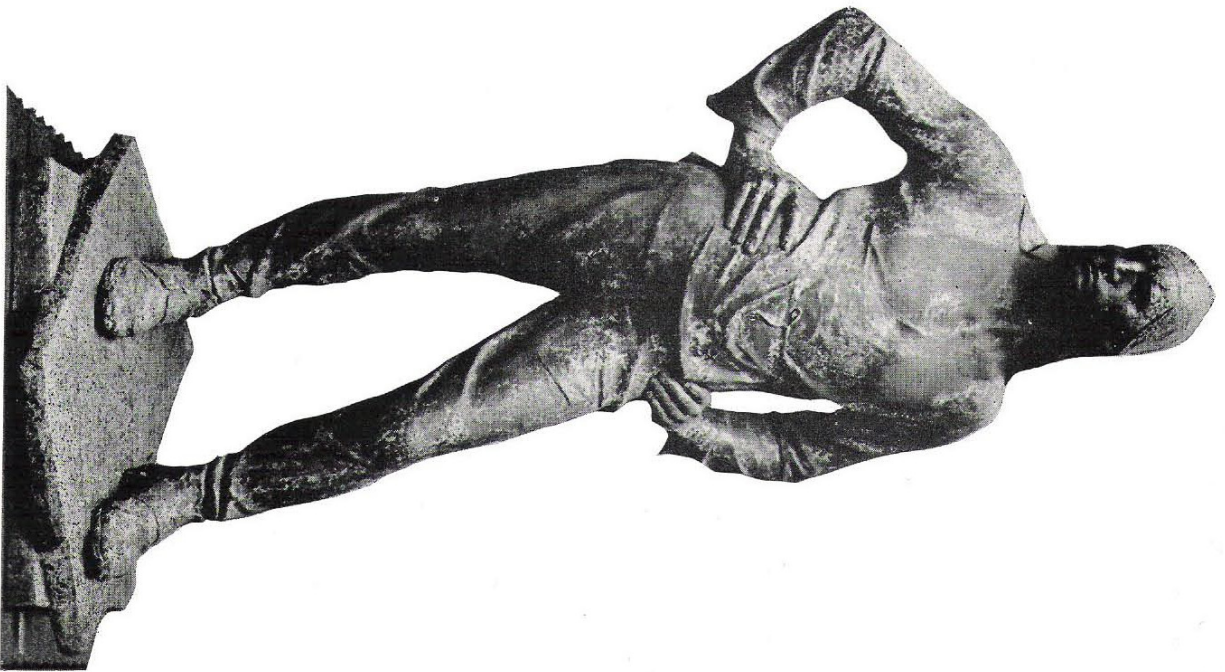


**JEAN-BAPTISTE-JOSEPH DE BAY (1779-1863):** *Portrait of General Cambronne.* Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Brussels. Born in Mechlin, De Bay received his education in Paris. He portrayed the famous General Cambronne who fought at Waterloo where he is supposed to have uttered the celebrated forerunner of General McAviffé's pronouncement "huts." Cambronne, however, denied the paternity of the word which made him famous.



**CHARLES AUGUSTE FRAIKIN (1817-1893):** *Queen Victoria of Great Britain.* Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Brussels. Fraikin had Constantin Meunier as one of his pupils. He portrayed Queen Victoria at the very beginning of her long and famous reign. The classical simplicity of this portrait is a good example of his art.



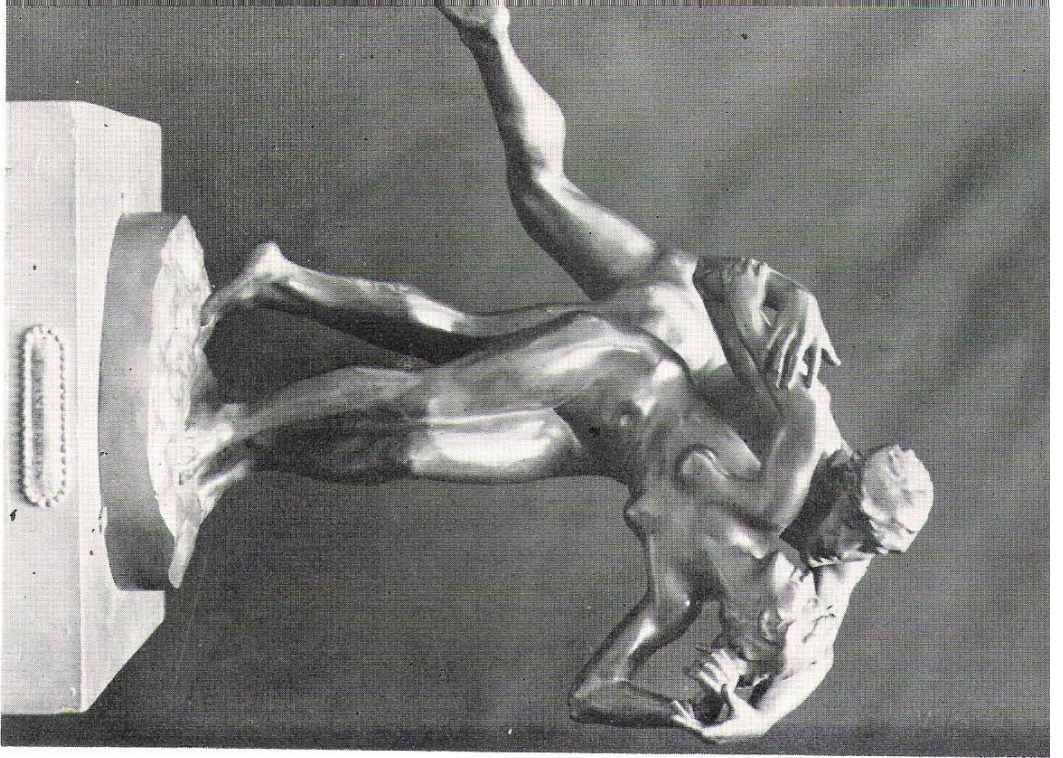


CONSTANTIN MEUNIER (1831-1905): *Antwerp Docker*. Museum of Fine Arts, Antwerp. The most popular and perhaps the most expressive of Meunier's statues of the worker.



PAUL DE VIGNE (1843-1901): *Jan Breydel*. Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Antwerp. Jan Breydel, dean of the Butchers' Guild, was one of the leaders of the revolt of the Flemish workers, which led to the defeat of the French aristocracy in 1302. Paul de Vigne, after studies in France and Italy, created the forceful imaginary portrait of the revolutionary 14th-century hero.





**JEF LAMBEAUX (1852-1908):** *The Kiss*. Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Brussels. One of the great Belgian sculptors of the 19th century, Lambeaux's romantic style met at first with a great deal of academic opposition. The Government, however, recognized his talent and helped him materially. *The Kiss* remains one of his boldest and most charming works.



**GEORGE MINNE (1866-1941):** *Pietà*. Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Antwerp. "Mother and Child" was one of the themes Minne treated most often and in endless variations. In this *Pietà* the tender devotion of the Mother towards the Son is shown not only in the expression of her face but also in the subtle harmony of volume and line.



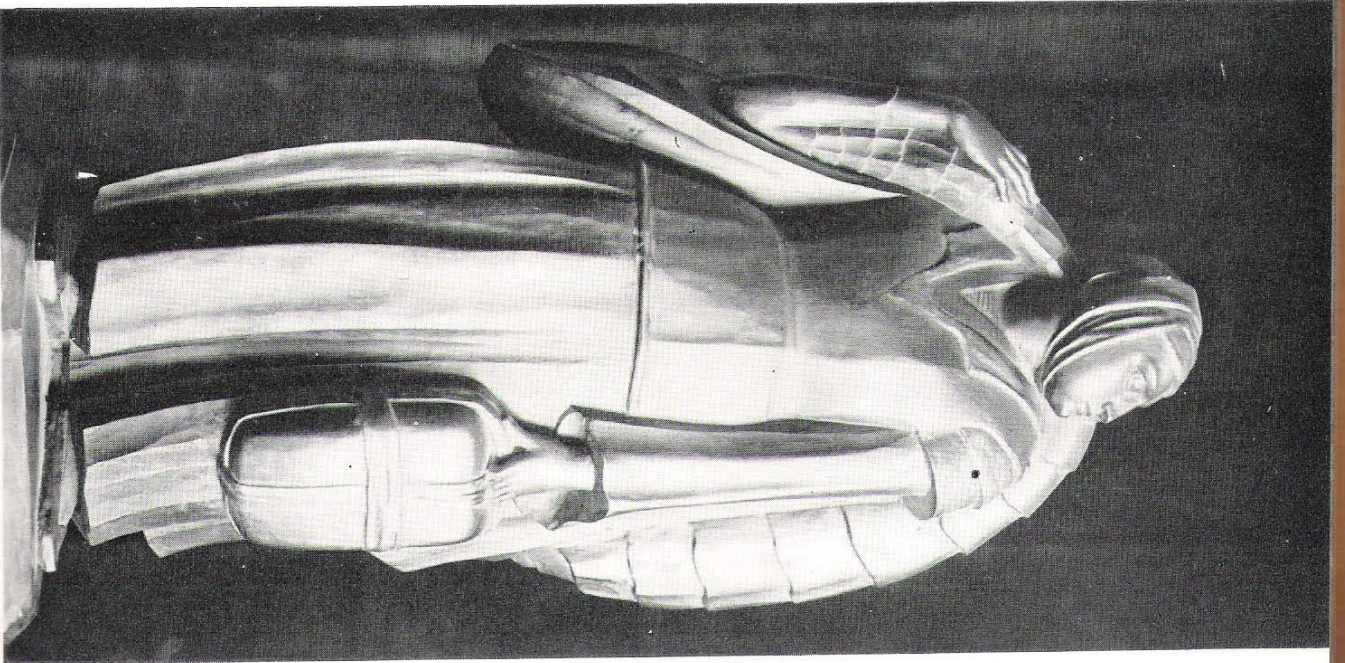


HENRI PUVREZ (1893): *Portrait of Constant Permeke, Painter and Sculptor*. Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Brussels. The forceful personality of Belgium's greatest painter since Ensor, has been rendered with great power by the Belgian sculptor, Puvrez, in this remarkable bust.



ADOLPHE WANSART (1873): *Portrait of Fernand Crommelynck*. Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Antwerp. Largely a self-made man, Wansart has achieved a powerful personal style as shown in this portrait of Belgium's celebrated playwright, Crommelynck.





**ERNEST WYNNANTS (1878):** *The Colporteur*. Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Antwerp. Wynnants became a sculptor the hard way, working long years as a craftsman in the Mechlin furniture trade. His work is original and abundant with a monumental quality that does not exclude sensual refinement.

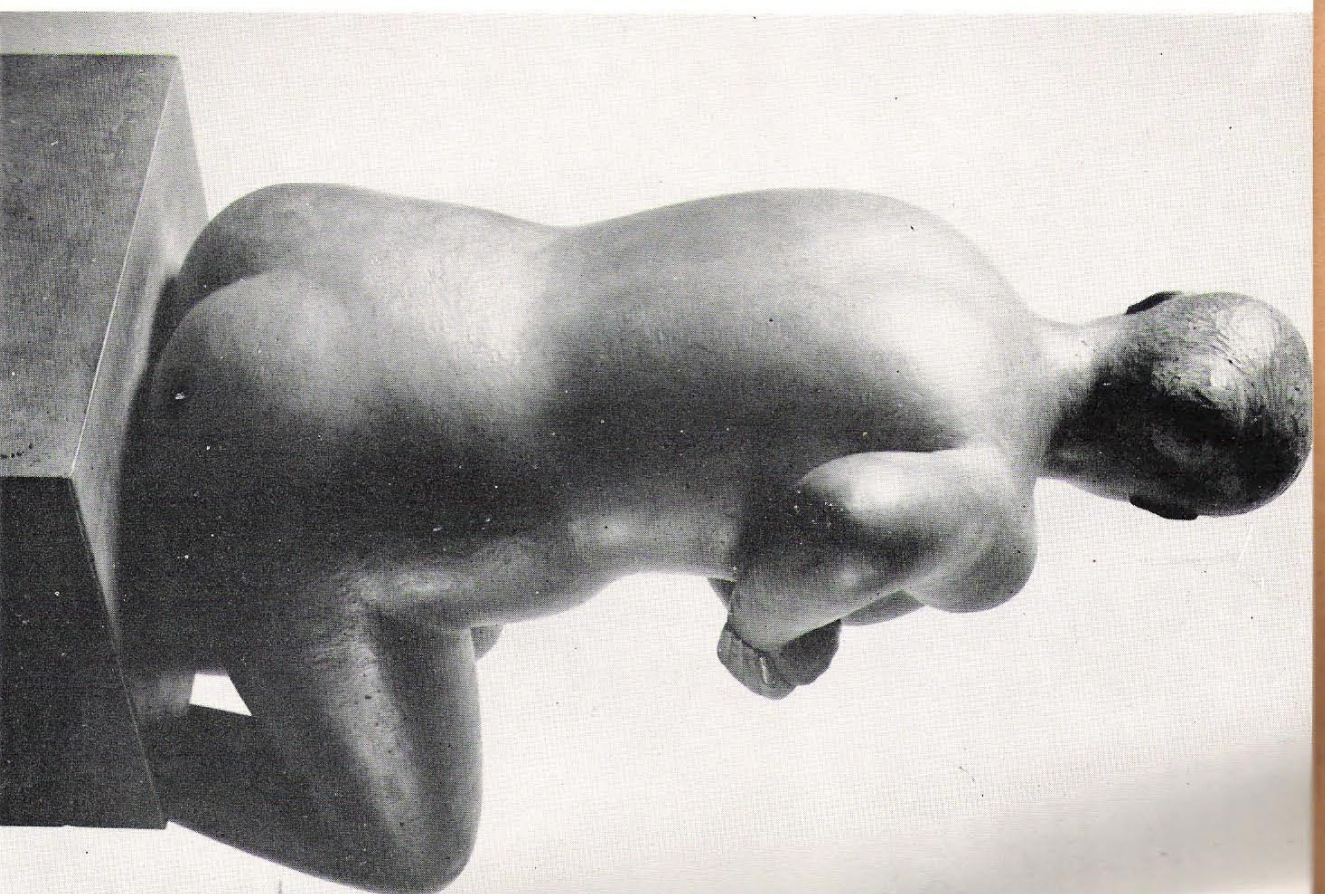


**RIK WOUTERS (1882-1916):** *Domestic Worries*. Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Antwerp. Wouters followed a double career as a painter and sculptor. Although he was an impressionist, and a very brilliant one at that, his sculpture has a truly monumental quality. This statue was erected at Bolstorff in his commemoration.



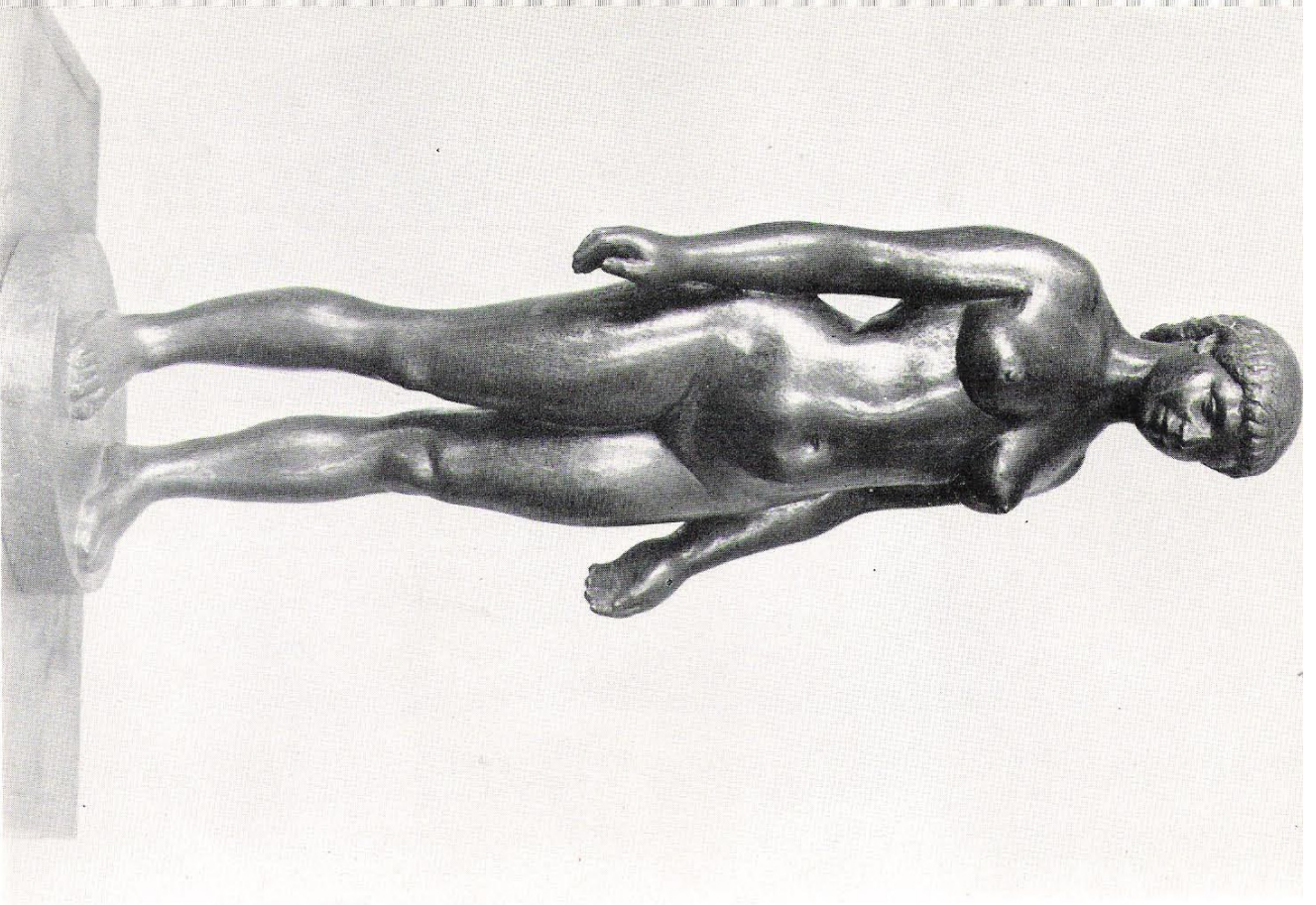


ALBERIC COLLIN (1886): *Eagle*. Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Antwerp. Collin is one of the outstanding Belgian sculptors of animals and almost his entire oeuvre is devoted to this art.

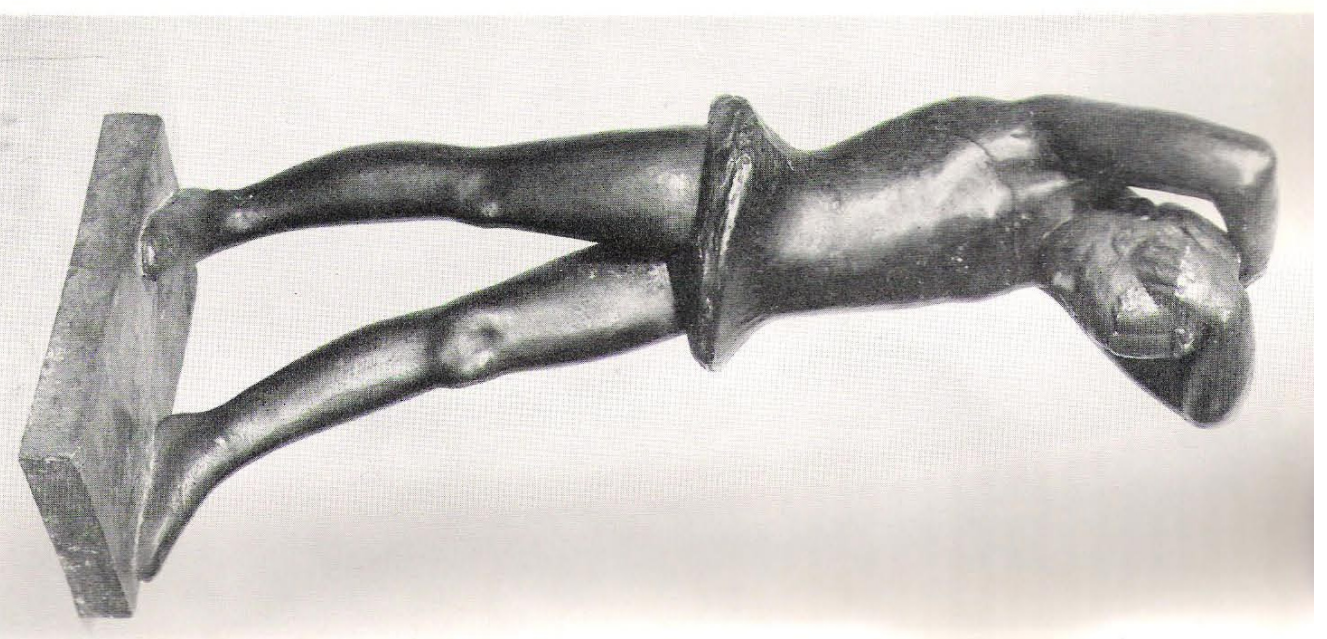


OSCAR JESPERES (1887): *Sitting Woman*. Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Brussels. While the canons of classical beauty do not apply to the art of Jespers, his work transcends reality in a most unusual way.





GEORGES GRARD (1901): *Naiad*. Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Antwerp. Serenity and simplicity are the earmarks of Grard's work; it consists nearly exclusively of the portrayal of monumental nude figures. He belongs with the leading sculptors of his country.



CHARLES LEPLAE (1903): *Dancer*. Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Antwerp. Leplae left the bar to devote himself to sculpture. He studied under Despiau and traveled extensively in Europe and Africa. He is one of Belgium's leading artists at present.



### III. SCHOOL OF CONGO SCULPTURE



THE BEGARWOMAN: Baluba figure bearing a bowl used in divinatory art. Belgian Congo Museum, Tervuren-Brussels. This fine achievement of African art is not a unique specimen of its style and perfection. At least nine more plastic works that bear technical and somatic resemblances to this statue have been identified and grouped under the denomination "long face bull style," named from the village of Bull on the river Luabala (Congo) where two of them were found.





**ANCESTRAL STATUE.** Baluba Tribe, Belgian Congo. Museum of Antiquities, Hessehuis, Antwerp. One of the most noble examples of Congo art in a style reminiscent of the Egyptians.



**BAKONGO MOTHER AND CHILD:** Belgian Congo Museum, Tervuren-Brussels. The elaborate geometrical pattern of the tattooing, in contrast with the naturalistic expression of the features, reveals the various influences felt by the Bakongo, who for several centuries had greater contact with the outside world than had other Congo tribes.



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